

Nicholas Sparks Accused of Trying to Ban LGBTQ+ Club At His School

 refinery29.com/en-us/2019/06/235424/nicholas-sparks-lgbt-club-emails

Nicholas Sparks, the famed author of *The Notebook*, *A Walk To Remember*, and other bestselling romance novels, has come under fire for his alleged role in banning an LGBTQ+ club at a prep school he co-founded in North Carolina. The scandal resurfaced after *The Daily Beast* published emails on Thursday exchanged between Sparks and the Epiphany School of Global Studies's former headmaster, Saul Benjamin, that leave his denials in question.

In one email, Sparks writes "not allowing them to have a club is NOT discrimination" about an LGBTQ organization attempting to form at his school. He also argued with Benjamin about including a specific mention of LGBTQ students in a non-discrimination clause. He seemed to chide Benjamin for "rock[ing] the boat" with "what some perceive as an agenda that strives to make homosexuality open and accepted," per another email obtained by *The Daily Beast*.

"We've had gay students before, many of them. Tom [a former headmaster] handled it quietly and wonderfully, and the students considered themselves fortunate," Sparks writes in one of the emails.

In a Twitter post, Sparks says *The Daily Beast's* reporting is "not news," and says it repeats "false accusations" and claims made against the school, and ignores evidence that he presented to the court in a lawsuit that's been going on between the school, Sparks, and Benjamin since 2014.

pic.twitter.com/y4nZX6TByD

— Nicholas Sparks (@NicholasSparks) June 13, 2019

In the suit, Benjamin claims there was a pattern of homophobia, racism, and harassment at Epiphany, according to *The Daily Beast*. "Sparks and members of the Board unapologetically marginalized, bullied, and harassed members of the School community," according to a complaint obtained by *The Daily Beast*, "whose religious views and/or identities did not conform to their religiously driven, bigoted preconceptions."

Sparks allegedly wrote in one email: "Regarding diversity, I've now told you half a dozen times that our lack of diversity has NOTHING to do with the school or anyone at the school. It's not because of what we as a school has or hasn't done. It has nothing to do with racism or vestiges of Jim Crow. It comes down to 1) Money and 2) Culture."

Sparks noted in his Twitter statement that many, but not all, of the lawsuit's claims haven't

held up in the the courts. He specifically points out that claims of discrimination and harassment against him and the school have been dismissed, but it's unclear if the emails published yesterday by *The Daily Beast* have been addressed in court yet. The TV Channel WITN reported that the emails were filed as part of the ongoing lawsuit. Benjamin's lawsuit will be back in court this summer.

Sparks's publicists have not yet responded to a request for comment from Refinery29.