

Lawsuit accuses Nicholas Sparks of racism, antisemitism and homophobia

Former headmaster of school founded by novelist alleges Sparks endorsed pupils' 'homocaust' against gay students

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The Notebook author founded the Epiphany School of Global Studies in North Carolina, which has no official religious affiliation.

Photograph: Disney / Rex Features

The former headmaster of a school founded and funded by Nicholas Sparks is suing for discrimination, alleging the bestselling author's "despicable and outrageous views" led him on a campaign to "humiliate, degrade and defame" the teacher.

The 47-page complaint is filled with a range of accusations against Sparks, including that he endorsed a group of students who attempted to enact a "homocaust" against a group of gay students and that he told

people the plaintiff, Saul Benjamin, had Alzheimers.

Benjamin, the former head of Sparks' Epiphany School of Global Studies in North Carolina, said in the complaint that the "greatest fiction" Sparks created was that he is a proponent of diversity and inclusiveness.

"In reality, the non-fiction version of Defendant Sparks feels free, away from public view, to profess and endorse vulgar and discriminatory views about African-Americans, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender ('LGBT') individuals, and individuals of non-Christian faiths," says the complaint, filed Thursday in the US district court for the eastern district of North Carolina.

He also complained that Sparks "diagnosed" him with Alzheimer's disease, harming his reputation in the community of New Bern, North Carolina, where the school is located.

Benjamin accused Sparks of trapping him in a room for hours without access to a bathroom during a meeting which Benjamin said had been orchestrated to "unlawfully remove" him from his role at the school and The Nicholas Sparks Foundation.

Epiphany school is independent from official religious affiliations, but says its values and guiding principles [are rooted in Judeo-Christian traditions](#). Sparks, who was raised Roman Catholic, had [his first Jewish protagonists in his 2013 book The Longest Ride](#).

Benjamin, who is of Jewish heritage and Quaker faith, believes that his efforts to make the school more diverse "enraged" Sparks and members of the school's board of trustees.

He also claims that Sparks repeatedly expressed "disdain" for African-Americans and endorsed a group of students who "sought to enact a 'homo-caust' against a group of gay students."

The other defendants include The Nicholas Sparks Foundation, The Epiphany school and three members of the school's board of trustees: Missy Blackerby, Tracy Lorentzen and Ken Gray. Benjamin accused the trustees of similar discriminatory comments and practices.

The complaint, which begins with three lines from Sparks' 2000 novel *The Rescue*, asks for an award of monetary damage for things including the "mental anguish and emotional distress" Benjamin claims he suffered at Sparks' hand.