

Twitter Reacts to Report That Nicholas Sparks Tried to Ban LGBT Club, Student Protests at His Private School

 [newsweek.com/twitter-reacts-report-that-nicholas-sparks-tried-ban-lgbt-club-student-protests-his-private-](https://www.newsweek.com/twitter-reacts-report-that-nicholas-sparks-tried-ban-lgbt-club-student-protests-his-private-1443896)

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Bestselling author Nicholas Sparks tried to ban an LGBT club and silence student protesters at a private Christian school he had started, according to emails unearthed as part of an ongoing lawsuit.

The *Daily Beast* published emails sent in 2013 from Sparks to Saul Benjamin, then-headmaster of the Epiphany School of Global Studies—a Christian academy he co-founded in North Carolina in 2006—showing that the novelist repeatedly took issue with Benjamin and his efforts to make the school inclusive of all faiths, races and sexualities.

Excerpts from these emails have since been disseminated in a storm of Twitter reposts, with many users voicing disdain for, and disappointment with, Sparks.

Since 2014, members of the Epiphany School's Board of Trustees, including Sparks, have been caught in a legal battle with Benjamin, based on what the former headmaster described as a pattern of bullying, racism and homophobia. Sparks attempted to repudiate the claims in a 29-page declaration to the court.

Benjamin's history with the Epiphany School [dates back to early 2013, *The Daily Beast* said.](#) That's when Benjamin, a Jewish-born Quaker who had been teaching at the Moroccan university Al Akhawayn, accepted Epiphany headmaster position position and moved with his family to New Bern, North Carolina, for a fall start date.

According to the *Daily Beast* report Benjamin immediately noticed that the school had few minority students, despite being situated in a part of North Carolina with a large non-white population. However, the former headmaster claimed his attempts to address this issue was met with objections by the school's board, including Sparks.

In one email allegedly sent from Sparks to Benjamin on November 18, 2013, the *Notebook* author told Benjamin "we've spent way, way too much time in the first few months talking about 'tolerance, diversity, non-discrimination, and LGBT' in these first twelve weeks. There was no simmering, hidden problem with any of these issues, at least as far as the school, or school personnel, or school policy was concerned: Nor was there a simmering problem within the student body ... we've had gay students before, many of them. [The former headmaster] handled it quietly and wonderfully, and the students considered themselves fortunate. I expect you to do the same."

That same email references a planned chapel protest by two LGBTQ students that Benjamin had been able to preempt.

"[A]fter hearing your story, I realize that it's imperative that I quickly offer a [Board of Trustees] resolution, prohibiting 'protests' of any kind on campus," wrote Sparks.

In a second email, dated November 17, 2013, Sparks outlined a number of issues he said he and others at the school had with Benjamin during his short time on the job.

The author claimed that Benjamin had what "some perceive as an agenda that strives to make homosexuality open and accepted." He later noted that "you can't really blame them for thinking such things," and cited examples:

"[T]here's a lot of talk about diversity and how we're awful because we don't have it, we need to have a 'GLBT Club,' we need to support the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, your references to our non-discrimination policy (as opposed, let's say, to a much heavier emphasis on 'celebrating our Christian traditions'..."

That same email also attempted to address Benjamin's concerns about the lack of non-white students at Epiphany.

"Regarding diversity," wrote Sparks, "I've now told you have 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. Even when you have the money, it will be hard sledding, no matter what Jenna does as far as outreach."

After fewer than 100 days on the job, Benjamin resigned as headmaster. He filed the lawsuit in October 2014 against Sparks and the school's Board of Trustees.

Hours after the story broke, Twitter users called Sparks a "deeply unpleasant person," and suggested that the author's alleged racism and homophobia has been evident in his writing for years, given his habit of writing almost exclusively about white men falling in love with white women.

Here are some initial reactions, including one from *Los Angeles Times* reporter Amy Kaufman, who has covered Hollywood and pop culture for the paper since 2009.

nicholas sparks sounds like a deeply unpleasant person, this article is well worth reading.

<https://t.co/OtsVbt7GXF>

— Gavia Baker-Whitelaw (@Hello_Tailor) June 13, 2019

FWIW, I spoke to him in 2010 and it remains one of my least favorite interviews ever.

<https://t.co/4BMf9mt3Lm> pic.twitter.com/aSj1ElqJJa

— Amy Kaufman (@AmyKinLA) [June 13, 2019](#)

Nicholas Sparks believes marriage is between one teenage man and one teenage woman (who is dying). <https://t.co/PFWZqNqSa0>

— Literary Hub (@lithub) [June 13, 2019](#)

The *Daily Beast* noted that Sparks would not provide its reporters with additional comment for their story.

However, he did release a after the story broke, in which he said the article "is not news" and "repeats false accusations and claims" while ignoring the "overwhelming evidence we have submitted in the Court."

Sparks said that the court dismissed all claims of discrimination or harrassment against the author, though there will be a trial to handle "a few remaining issues."