


Nicholas Sparks, Author of Your Mom's Second and Fifth Favorite Novels, Allegedly Tried to Ban an LGBT Club

 [esquire.com/entertainment/books/a28007372/nicholas-sparks-lgbt-controversy](https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a28007372/nicholas-sparks-lgbt-controversy)

Somewhere in the stretches of beautiful North Carolina, I imagine that Nicholas Sparks is sitting on an expansive deck that looks out over the ocean. Perhaps there's a sailboat, or the sound of children laughing in the background. How nice. He takes a sip from a large glass of iced tea and sets it down on a reclaimed barn wood patio table, stained with water rings and memories of summers gone by. He looks at it—his trusty laptop—and hits return. He's sent it. The perfect problematic email.

In a report by [The Daily Beast](#), it appears the prolific romance author is just brimming with all kinds of ambivalence toward LGBT people. The author, who co-founded and serves on the Board of Trustees for Epiphany School of Global Studies, is one of a number of board members currently entrenched in a legal battle. A former headmaster alleges instances of homophobia, racism, and general discrimination from multiple members of the board, and it's all a giant mess. In a series of emails obtained by The Daily Beast, Sparks in particular argued against the inclusion of LGBT students in a non-discrimination clause and justified the banning of an LGBT-centric club.

The school's former headmaster, Saul Benjamin, allegedly butted heads with Sparks and other Board members after several instances involving minority groups, along with claims of defamation against his mental well-being.

The suit from Benjamin alleges he was forced to resign in part for speaking up against the school's discriminatory practices—an account that those accused in the case have refuted. Sparks and his legal representation have denied the allegations. Additionally, the judge presiding over the case has thrown out that portion of the suit since its initial filing. In a statement, [issued in Variety](#), Sparks stated, "The article appearing in today's The Daily Beast is not news, and repeats false accusations and claims made against Epiphany and me, and largely ignores the overwhelming evidence we have submitted to the Court."

But the issue here is less to do with Benjamin's firing and more to the misguided politics of Sparks' school. In one situation, an LGBT student group was being developed, but the school shut the group down. When allegations of discrimination came out, Sparks allegedly said in an email, "not allowing them to have a club is NOT discrimination." Cool. Got it. The thing is, unless these students weren't following protocol or attempting to navigate outside of the complex red tape of (checks notes) establishing a club at a college-preparatory school, I'm not sure how that's *not* discrimination.

While we could go in any which direction with this circus, for the sake of brevity let's just choose one point to hone in on: the key issue here is Sparks' seeming lack of awareness of how discrimination works. The whole situation would be a lot less volatile if the alleged emails from Sparks didn't say things like, "We've had gay students before, many of them. Tom handled it quietly and wonderfully, and the students considered themselves fortunate." *Considered themselves fortunate*. Let that marinate for a minute. Swallow it with a sip of that iced tea. No child should consider themselves fortunate to exist in the presence of other humans. That's not a privilege; it's called being alive.

When people like Sparks suggest LGBT students be taken out of a non-discrimination clause, the exclusion speaks to something more than political language. Including LGBT students in a protective clause isn't giving them any more rights than anyone else; it's ensuring they can't be harangued for simply existing as they are.

If you don't see why LGBT children might need those protections (or even a school-sanctioned club), then it's likely because you're ignoring the goings on of the world. Then again, what can you expect from a novelist whose sense of adventure is setting a story off the white sandy beaches of pastoral Coastal Carolina?