

Throw Nicholas Sparks And 'The Notebook' Into The Trash

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When it comes to romance films, *The Notebook* sits comfortably in the top tier. The movie, adapted in 2004 from Nicholas Sparks' 1996 novel, stars Rachel McAdams and Ryan Gosling, the quintessential pair of the early aughts. The film features an abundance of kissing in the rain, snail mail ("I wrote you every day for a year!"), and a love triangle with James Marsden—could you blame Allie? Fifteen years after the silver screen debut of the now cult classic movie, the love story is being adapted again for Broadway. This legacy has made it seem as though Allie and Noah's love was bulletproof, but a recent story in The Daily Beast reveals author Nicholas Sparks prohibited the creation of an LGBT club at the Christian school he co-founded in North Carolina. No amount of *New York Times* bestsellers or film adaptations can substitute for being a good person.

In 2017, The Daily Beast reported on a lawsuit that alleges the author purposely discriminated against minority students at the Epiphany School. On Thursday, The Daily Beast published leaked emails between Sparks and former headmaster Saul Benjamin that show Sparks attempting to forbid LGBT clubs and protests on school grounds. "Sparks and members of the Board unapologetically marginalized, bullied, and harassed, members of the school community whose religious views and/or identities did not conform to their religiously driven, bigoted preconceptions," Benjamin's legal team claimed in a 47-page complaint filed in 2017.

The emails, which date as far back as 2013, show tension between Sparks' beliefs and his concern for how Benjamin was managing the student body. In an email, Sparks reiterated his stance on the social club. "I'm sure I will be asked that question at the forum and my answer will be: 'There will be no club in the future either,'" he wrote. Throughout the correspondence, the author maintained that Epiphany School did not have a discrimination problem. "Not allowing them admittance is discrimination. Not allowing them to have a club is NOT discrimination," he said. The difference in opinion was reflected in another email sent from Sparks, addressing the former headmaster's reputation among the Board of Trustees. "Again, you chose to rock the boat hard, not only with Chapel changes [...], but with what some perceive as an agenda to make homosexuality open and accepted[...]."

The new developments are a part of a wave of sobering truths about a few of your favorite authors. Last year, The Daily Beast detailed how *Twilight* author, Stephanie Meyer, opted out of selecting a diverse cast for her highly popularized vampire saga. "[Meyer] just could not accept the Cullens to be more diverse, because she had really seen them in her mind, she knew who each character was representing in a way, a personal friend or a relative or

something," director Catherine Hardwicke said. The director says casting Edi Gathegi, a Black actor, as Laurent, took work. "The only reason that came through was he was described as having olive skin. And I said, there are black olives out there!"

The controversy surrounding Sparks is a tough pill to swallow for anyone who has watched the film adaptations of his novels an embarrassing number of times. *The Notebook*, *The Last Song*, *Dear John*, and *A Walk to Remember* were all a part of the Rolodex of romance films many of us watched in adolescence. Sparks should be held accountable for the allegations surrounding his involvement with the Epiphany School, even if that means not supporting some of your favorite overly cheesy romance films in the process.