

Elton John Slams Mayor for Banning Gay Children's Books

Singer-songwriter and gay rights advocate Elton John has criticized the new mayor of Venice on social media as “boorishly bigoted” for banning books about homosexuality from the Italian city’s schools.

The mayor, Luigi Brugnaro, who was elected in June, banned some 50 books featuring same-sex couples from schools a month later, fulfilling one of his campaign promises.

The singer, who has two children with his partner David Furnish, took to Instagram to post an image of Todd Parr’s “The Family Book,” which details the lives of various kinds of families, and describe Brugnaro as looking “extremely silly.”

“He’s stupidly chosen to politicize children’s books by banning titles that touch on same-sex families living happily ever after,” the singer posted on Saturday.

“Beautiful Venice is indeed sinking, but not as fast as the boorishly bigoted Brugnaro.”

Banned books are reported to include Ophelie Texier’s Jean a deux mamans (Jean has two mummies) and Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell’s And Tango Makes Three—based on the real life coupling of two penguins in a New York zoo.

The 68-year-old singer’s intervention follows a wider backlash in Italy, where campaigners carried out a marathon read-in of the banned books and more than 250 authors wrote to the mayor asking for their books to be removed in an act of solidarity.

While most of the banned books have been returned to libraries, Brugnaro has defied criticism of his decision in a statement posted on his website and on Twitter.

The mayor criticized the “cultural arrogance” of the previous administration which introduced the books without “asking anything to anyone, especially to families.”

“Dear Elton John, I have no problem with homosexuals,” Brugnaro tweeted on Tuesday.

The controversy comes amid wider debate in Italy on same-sex marriage and parenting.

Since Ireland backed same-sex marriage by a landslide in a referendum in May, Italy is now the only country in western Europe where any form of same-sex union—whether civil partnership or marriage—is still illegal.

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said last month his government would introduce a law on civil unions by the end of the year. Italy is deeply divided on the issue and protests against civil unions in June brought hundreds of thousands to the streets of Rome.

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