

Facebook rejects ownership suit as a 'fraud'

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Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg attends a press conference on the sidelines of the G8 summit in Deauville. Facebook on Thursday dismissed as a "brazen and outrageous fraud" a lawsuit filed by a New York man who claims he is entitled to at least 50 percent of the wildly successful social network.

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Paul Ceglia of Wellsville, New York, in a suit filed in June of last year, claimed that he signed a contract with [Facebook](#) co-founder [Mark Zuckerberg](#) in April 2003 to design a website called "The Face Book" or "The Page Book."

Ceglia's [lawyers](#) have produced copies of emails and a contract purportedly signed by Zuckerberg, who was then a student at Harvard

University.

Zuckerberg and Facebook, in 23-page response on Thursday to Ceglia's claims, denounced his suit as a "brazen and outrageous [fraud](#) on the court" based on a "doctored contract and fabricated evidence."

"The purported contract was signed in 2003, yet plaintiff waited until 2010 to file this action -- a seven-year delay during which plaintiff remained utterly silent while Facebook grew into one of the world's best-known companies," they said. "Plaintiff has now come out of the woodwork seeking billions in damages."

"Plaintiff is an inveterate scam artist whose misconduct extends across decades and borders," they charged.

New York state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo accused Ceglia, the plaintiff, in 2009 of taking more than 200,000 dollars from customers of his wood fuel pellet company and then failing to deliver any products or refunds.

Facebook said Zuckerberg had met with Ceglia in the lobby of a Boston hotel in April 2003, responding to an online job about a site called StreetFax.com, which provided a photo database of traffic intersections for insurance adjusters.

"He entered into a written agreement with StreetFax pursuant to which he agreed to perform certain limited services solely in connection with the development of an inoperable and now defunct website known as StreetFax.com," Facebook said.

"At no time did Zuckerberg enter into any agreement, written or otherwise, with plaintiff or anyone affiliated with plaintiff concerning Facebook or any similar social networking service or website," Facebook

said.

Facebook's origins have been the subject of two recent books and a hit Hollywood movie, "The Social Network."

A pair of Harvard classmates, Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, have been involved in a long-running dispute with Zuckerberg over Facebook, claiming he stole their idea for the social network.

The twin brothers agreed to a \$65 million settlement but have been seeking to have the case reexamined. A California court this month rejected their bid and the brothers have said they plan to appeal to the US Supreme Court.

Facebook, which launched in 2004, has become the world's most popular social network with more than 500 million members. Zuckerberg's net worth was recently estimated at 6.9 billion dollars by Forbes magazine.

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