

How 'losing friend to misinformation' drove Facebook whistleblower | The Guardian

By Dan Milmo

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Frances Haugen, the whistleblower behind a series of damaging revelations about Facebook, is adamant that she wants to help the social media company and not foment hatred of it.

The 37-year-old leaked tens of thousands of internal company documents after becoming frustrated that Facebook was not publicly acknowledging the harm its platforms could cause.

"If people just hate Facebook more because of what I've done, then I've failed. I believe in truth and reconciliation - we need to admit reality. The first step of that is documentation," she told the Wall Street Journal, which revealed the documents in its Facebook Files series.

In her final message on Facebook's internal system, posted when she left in May, she wrote: "I don't hate Facebook. I love Facebook. I want to save it."

Haugen, born and raised in Iowa by a doctor father and a mother who gave up an academic career to become an episcopalian priest, said it was a lost friendship that changed her view of social media.

Haugen was a successful tech professional with a CV that included stints at Pinterest and Google but a decade ago she was diagnosed with celiac disease, an autoimmune condition, and in 2014 entered an intensive care unit with a blood clot in her thigh. A family friend was hired to help her with daily tasks such as shopping but their relationship deteriorated as he became obsessed with online forums touting conspiracy theories about dark forces manipulating politics.

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