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## **Pillow Fight: Mike Lindell's Battle to Save Donald Trump and You**



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On the last Friday before the Inauguration the Minnesota businessman named Mike Lindell—better known as Mr. Pillow—visited the White House. It was not the first time that Lindell had visited Trump in the White House, but it was different from his previous visits. The White House was quiet, emptied of much of the staff who had moved up their departures after the assault on the Capitol the previous week. Why put up any longer with Trump's surliness and tantrums? Or risk being sucked into a conversation with him that might expose them to legal problems? By the time Lindell showed up, Trump's staff was down to the most pathetic remnants. The mutts that slink back even after they get kicked.

In the final desperate days of his presidency, a visit by even Mr. Pillow might not seem very important to Trump, but Trump was more isolated than he had been at any time since 2016 and, as we know, he can never get enough attention, enough flattery. And Lindell—whatever he had in mind—was in many respects a flattering replica of Trump.

Lindell earned the Mr. Pillow moniker through his invention of the pillow he named My Pillow which is also the name of the company that makes My Pillows. Which are patented, by the way. You would know these things if you watched late-night reruns of “Perry Mason” and “Barnaby Jones” like I do. However, Lindell had not come calling to deliver a My Pillow for the President’s highly stable head—he had already done that—he came rather to present an improbable plan to rescue Trump’s floundering attempts to overturn the November election.

Lindell first met Trump in New York in August 2016. The two men hit it off—which is easy to understand simply on the basis of what I’ve said here. Not long after that meeting, Trump invited Lindell to the White House. Lindell subsequently campaigned for Trump in 2016. He is a prime example of the sort of Trump supporter who had never been involved in politics before Trump stirred them. He has all the woeful features of those lost souls who found themselves and we wish they hadn’t. The foremost being an unshakeable attachment to whatever object they latched onto that delivered them from their foggy misery. I should say objects, because while Trump was the most important object, in their new ‘woke’ state most of these new followers discovered all sorts of other objects and ideas which they clung to with a tenacity similar to their loyalty to Trump. Things like the secret cabal of Satanists that includes Obama and Hillary Clinton who trade in little children whom they sexually abuse, or the lizard-like space aliens who work in the highest reaches of the government, to name only a couple—bear these things in mind whenever you hear of the need for a dialogue to ‘heal the divisions’ between Trump supporters and the rest of us who are not idiots and lunatics.

Lindell was like these people, but his devotion to Trump went beyond wearing funny hats and taking selfies of themselves saying stupid things and posting them on the internet. He went to work for Trump. Even before the 2020 campaign began in earnest, Lindell was making appearances with Trump and behalf of him, always speaking with that religious fervor that distinguishes Trump’s supporters. When Lindell spoke to the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2019, he said Trump was “The greatest president in history” and that he was “chosen by God.” It was for this sort of hyperbolic praise that Trump in 2020 made Lindell his Minnesota campaign manager. Hyperbole is Trump’s favorite rhetorical figure.

To understand how Lindell distinguished himself from run-of-the-mill Trump converts so as to become so close to the great man, a look at his pre-Trump life is necessary.

In the years before he started My Pillow in 2004 and before he’d shown any interest in politics, Lindell’s life was unremarkable. He had among other things run a carpet cleaning business and a lunch wagon business. Depending on how you look at these things, the most

remarkable thing about him was his hobby, which was smoking crack. And in fact, in looking long—too long—at Lindell’s life I have reached the conclusion, that if he had never smoked crack he probably never would have started My Pillow or become one of Trump’s political operatives. He owes it all as much to crack as he does to Jesus.

Lindell says his crack habit got so bad that in 2009 his crack dealers actually got together and did an “intervention”—in this story even crack dealers seem to have more concern for their fellow humans than Donald Trump does. After that, as Lindell tells his story, a sequence of events happened quickly that ultimately would lead him to Donald Trump and the White House. The first thing was he saw Jesus in a dream. Then in a mania one night he wrote the words “my pillow” on every piece of paper he could find, and what do you know, in the morning he had no craving for crack. And sometime after these things—it’s hard to pinpoint it in the rush of events—he also saw Donald Trump in a dream. We don’t know whether Jesus actually said “Start My Pillow.” But it doesn’t matter because in 2009 that’s what he did. Whether Trump said anything, Lindell does not tell us. Although it’s hard to believe Trump didn’t say something. If nothing else, “Bring me a Diet-Coke.”

But back to reality. Which is not all it’s cracked up to be. Ho Ho. Even with Jesus backing it, My Pillow was not an immediate success.

The company limped along for several years until Lindell made an infomercial in 2011. Lindell shot the thirty-minute infomercial in one day. The infomercial shows rows of happy workers at their sewing machines passionately making My Pillows—“Every pillow is made with passion,” Lindell says. The infomercial was a game changer. My Pillow’s business picked up almost immediately. Two years later the infomercial was running an average of two hundred times a day on national networks. As soon as the infomercial aired, Lindell followed it up with regular commercials. In the most famous one, a bedraggled man suffering from a bad night’s sleep opens his medicine cabinet and there inside the cabinet is Lindell who grins and says, “Looks like you’re not sleeping well!” The man calls to his wife, “Megan!” She comes and seeing Lindell says, “You’re that guy!” Her husband says, “The My Pillow guy! (that ad is now on my television as I write this). Lindell’s epiphany in the medicine cabinet is comparable to Trump’s “You’re fired!” bit on *The Apprentice*. For many people those bits are first things that come to mind when they hear the name of either man.

Following the infomercial and the ads, in his ambitious and relentless campaign of self-promotion, Lindell exploited every other sort of venue possible for personal appearances and events. In 2015, he staged a pillow fight at a minor league baseball game of the St. Paul Saints that broke the world record in the Guinness Book of Records for the largest pillow fight ever. Three years later Lindell repeated the whole stupid stunt with an even larger pillow fight at an evangelical rally in Minneapolis so that he broke his own record. But while these events made the local TV news, it was in the infomercial and the ads on national

television that made Lindell and his pillow famous and won him the attention of Trump. And like Trump, for Lindell it was TV that opened the door to politics.

In Lindell's savvy use of television, Trump must have recognized in him not simply another Ron Popeil, but something even closer to himself—an honest to god con man. The proof is that Lindell soon not only attracted Trump's attention, but also the attention of consumer protection groups and soon after that the Law. Between 2013 and 2016, the Better Business Bureau of Minnesota received 220 complaints about Lindell. Many of them initially concerned a commercial featuring what is known in the trade as a BOGO, a “buy one, get one free” offer. But since it ran continuously, the Better Business Bureau pointed out that it was not a sale price or a special offer. It was simply the regular price of two pillows. So in 2017, due to this and numerous other complaints, the BBB lowered its rating for My Pillow from A+ to F- and dropped its accreditation. Lindell responded as Trump would have. He said the whole thing was cooked up by his enemies and he continued to run the ad until the summer of 2020. It didn't slow down the My Pillow juggernaut one bit. At the same time, he expanded his efforts into other means of self-promotion. He wrote a book about his salvation through Jesus and pillows, and he hit the evangelical circuit selling books and pillows. At the same time My Pillow began making other products. Beach towels, dog beds, “waffle blankets” and many other things. All of them totally unique not like anything else anybody has ever done or thought of etc etc. In all of these things, it's clear that his personality is almost a replica of Trump. Yet it is not that Lindell consciously modeled himself on Trump. Rather he turned out to be a miserable repulsive human being because he had a miserable childhood just like Trump. Lindell's parents divorced when he was seven—how the divorce itself affected him is not something he speaks about—but he does say as a child he felt rejected by everyone around him and he spent his whole childhood and adolescence trying to get attention. In other words, his childhood made him destined to be a pathetic excuse for a human being in pretty much the same way Trump is.

In order to share his miserable story, Lindell next became involved in philanthropy. In 2012 he founded the Lindell Foundation, then the Lindell Recovery Network to help drug addicts. With a Christian angle, of course. But Lindell's largest philanthropic gifts were not made through his foundation.

Lindell made three political donations that must be nearly equal to or greater than his foundation's annual outlay. Laura Ingraham was the first person to benefit from Lindell's personal philanthropy. After the Parkland, Florida school shooting on February 2018 in which seventeen people were murdered, a number of student banded together to promote gun control, the outlawing of assault weapons and other such measures. One of the most vocal activists was a student named David Hogg. Ingraham mocked, disparaged him as a student in the Fox News ad hominem style. Hogg and other Parkland student activists responded by calling for advertisers to boycott Ingraham's show. To her surprise, in late March dozens of

advertisers did just that. Lindell came to her rescue. In the first week of April he increased My Pillow's purchase of advertising for the program by six hundred and twenty-five percent. Then last year he made a large donation to help Kyle Rittenhouse, who was accused of two counts of first degree murder in Kenosha, Wisconsin in the aftermath of the police shooting of Jacob Blake. Rittenhouse was far short of meeting the 2-million-dollar bail until Lindell kicked in. Also last year Lindell stepped in to help Tucker Carlson when many major companies suddenly withdrew their ads from his show after Media Matters sent them a digest of his comments about the usual targets: blacks, immigrants and women. Lindell picked up the slack and by June 2020 nearly 38% of Carlson's ad revenues came from My Pillow.

Lindell's similarity to Trump extends also to lawsuits. The first lawsuit came in April 2016 when plaintiffs in California and Florida filed a class action suit against him. The suit said that, among other deceptive statements, Lindell claimed to be a "sleep expert." Lindell had billed himself as that in some of his ads although he had no training or certification in what is, after all, a field of medicine. Lindell, a polymath like Trump, also touted his invention My Pillow as a treatment and/or cure for maladies like fibromyalgia, cerebral palsy, acid reflux, restless leg syndrome and of course, snoring. Soon similar lawsuits in New York and California were brought against Lindell and My Pillow. In every case his claims for the medicinal properties of My Pillow were shown to be fraudulent and Lindell paid up. Undaunted, he took on Covid-19.

Lindell began to promote an extract of the oleander as a possible cure for Covid19. This took many doctors by surprise. Oleander, a plant commonly found in flower gardens, is poisonous to animals and humans, though its bitter taste makes its ingestion unlikely by either animals or humans. However, a company called Phoenix Biotechnology, which had been selling oleandrin, an extract of the plant, as a dietary supplement, began to claim that oleandrin could also interfere with the replication of the Covid-19 virus. The company to that date had only done its own tests—which needless to say were not peer reviewed.

Lindell who was on the board of Phoenix got wind of their push for oleandrin as a cure for the covid virus. And he began to push the extract as a possible cure for Covid-19 to another prominent Trump supporter, Ben Carson, brain surgeon and erstwhile Republican presidential candidate. Then the two of them went to Trump and recommended it as a possible cure for the covid virus. Lindell offered Trump his own testimony. He and his family were taking it and it was a "cure" for the Covid19 virus. He said, "This is the most amazing miracle thing I've ever seen in my life, so I went all in.... If you want to know what I think, I think it's being suppressed because somebody doesn't want this out there because it works." Trump, having touted Lysol as a possible cure, said why not? And he agreed that the FDA should test oleandrin too.

Until Trump forced the FDA to look into the extract, apart from the bogus testing of Phoenix Biotechnology, the only other research about the toxic plant had concerned antidotes to

instances of oleandrin poisoning. Poisonings which occur mostly in sheep and cattle who eat it only in extreme hunger, but sometimes occur in humans who can read or watch cable news. When the FDA finally got around to testing oleandrin, it warned the company that their claims were baseless and made it “an unapproved and misbranded drug.”

Having taken on saving America from Covid-19, Lindell moved on to his next mission. Which was to save Trump. To help him overturn the results of the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election.

Trump, as we know, has said ad nauseam that those results were fraudulent. I should say that many people, myself included, thought Trump really believed this. But apparently this is not so. In an article published January 17, the Axios journalist Jonathan Swan wrote that Trump, when wandering around White House would sometimes slip up and depart from the script, saying, “Can you believe I lost to that fucking guy? That fucking corpse?” Nevertheless, at least 60 million other Americans believe that delusion and Mr. Pillow is one of them. Put that in your crack pipe and smoke it.

Lindell’s plan to solve everything in one fell swoop was a declaration of martial law. But on what basis? Here is where the creative genius of Mr. Pillow shows itself. Trump would declare martial law to deal with the insurrection he had fomented. Of course, Lindell did not believe that Trump fomented it. Lindell, like many other Trump supporters, believed that the assault was actually carried out by Antifa members disguised as Republicans by wearing furry hats with horns and Camp Auschwitz hoodies they got at last summer’s concentration camp reenactments. Who else but the inventor of My Pillow—crackhead turned crackpot—could have come up with this mind-bending scenario?

Lindell denied he came to pitch the martial law proposal. That was an alternative fact. As he paced on the White House portico waiting for his audience, a journalist took a photo of his typed notes. Lindell’s coffee cup and cell phone partially obscure the notes, but the rudiments of Lindell’s plan are clear enough.

It was Lindell’s most important battle. Since he believes that God has selected Donald Trump to save America, now that Trump was floundering it follows that God has selected him to save Donald Trump. I don’t think that Trump believes that. Trump believes he is more important than God. Which may be why he sent Mr. Pillow off to work with some junior staff member on his martial law script. But for a true believer like Lindell, Trump’s tepid reaction was as nothing. He was still bolstered by his unshakeable belief in those two things. Namely, that God had sent Donald Trump to save America and He sent himself Mr. Pillow to save Donald Trump. So Lindell, six days after the assault on the Capitol, made—what else?—an infomercial. Which he put on YouTube. In it he stated that Trump would still be president on January 20<sup>th</sup> and thereafter. Whether Mr. Pillow offered any subtle reasoning about how this would happen or whether he wanted it to be a big surprise, I cannot tell you because I never saw it. YouTube took down the infomercial almost immediately. But so what? The truth is out there.

Trump now shuffles around in Mar-a-Lago, waiting to hear from Melania's divorce lawyer. When someone as big as Trump appears to be bankrupt, it's important to file first and be at the front of a long line. Since noon January 20th, the view is clouded with debts, lawsuits and probable criminal charges too—and who knows—maybe even prison. From the White House to the Big House. That would be an epic tale that only Mel Brooks could tell.

Trump has a minder now. A Washington Examiner reporter found him Friday at his regular table in the grill of his West Palm golf club. "We'll do something, but not just yet—" was all the usually loquacious ex-president could say before his minder swooped in and excused the reporter.

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