



## Kirsten Powers: Newt Gingrich Is in Love With Himself

Dec 7, 2011 4:45 AM EST

**Newt Gingrich's self-love is boundless. Unearthing a string of quotes going back to the 1980s, Kirsten Powers looks at the former House speaker's long record of self-infatuation.**

"I told somebody at one point [of my presidential campaign], 'This is like watching Walton or Kroc develop Walmart and McDonald's.'" So said [Newt Gingrich](#), whose presidential campaign boasts roughly 40 staff members. I am going to be the nominee," the modern-day Narcissus declared while gazing at his reflection in the polls.

"I am much like [Ronald] Reagan and Margaret Thatcher," the man who was run out of Congress in disgrace and is despised by nearly every conservative who has ever worked with him recently mused to CNN.

"I don't want my country to collapse. I don't want my daughter and wife raped and killed," Speaker [Gingrich](#) told a stunned *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporter in 1994 in explaining why America, nay, the world, needed him. After all, he told her, "People like me are what stand between us and Auschwitz."

And they said Al Gore was an exaggerator.

Self-aggrandizing distortions of reality have been Gingrich's hallmark for decades. Most recently, he redescribed his sleazy lobbying for conservative bête noire Freddie Mac as the work of a "historian." It's not hard to envisage that in the delusional swirl known as Newt's thought life this is true. Only in the confines of his gray matter could it make sense that a man who wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on Belgian educational policy in the Congo would be sought out by Freddie Mac for historical advice.

Republican presidential candidate former House Speaker Newt Gingrich is pictured during a commercial break at the Iowa GOP/Fox News Debate on August 11, 2011 at the CY Stephens Auditorium in Ames, Iowa., Charlie Neibergall / Getty Images

“People need to hear what I have to say. There’s no one else who can say what I can say. It doesn’t matter what I live,” Gingrich explained to Wife No. 2, who was confused that he was [dumping](#) her for his mistress the day after giving a speech on family values.

GOP Sen. Tom Coburn, who does not count himself a fan of Gingrich, referred Sunday to the former speaker having “one standard for the people [he is] leading and a different standard for [himself].” This is because narcissists cannot function without double standards. After all, what kind of mental gymnastics had to occur for Speaker Gingrich to argue that President Bill Clinton should be impeached for lying under oath about an affair with a staffer while Gingrich was carrying on an affair with a staffer?

Newt’s fantastical repurposing of reality is amusing. Until you imagine him propagating another reign of tantrums on America, and on a much grander scale.

But this occurred during an era that was riddled with bizarre Gingrich antics. The most famous was Gingrich forcing a government shutdown because Bill Clinton didn’t talk to him on *Air Force One* while they were flying back from a funeral. With no sense of embarrassment, Gingrich told reporters, “It’s petty, but I think it’s human.”

On one level, Newt’s narcissistic self-involvement and fantastical repurposing of reality is amusing. Until you consider he could potentially have an opportunity to propagate another reign of tantrums on America, but on a much grander scale.

But he has changed, say his supporters. He has matured. He’s different.

Did you hear about the time Newt Gingrich [compared](#) the mild-mannered Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to Joseph Stalin? It was three months ago. Perhaps it’s not a coincidence that a newt is a cold-blooded animal known for releasing a toxic residue that can be severely irritating.

“I was charging \$60,000 a speech,” Gingrich, [bragged](#) last week, of his pre-presidential-run days. So wrapped up in his own grandiosity is he that he never felt it was inappropriate to say such things to supporters at a shopping mall in South Carolina where the median annual income for a family of four is about \$58,000.

“I helped Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp develop supply-side economics,” the “new” Newt announced last week, which no doubt caused considerable shock to economist Arthur Laffer.

“I helped lead the effort to defeat communism in the Congress,” Gingrich claimed in the same [interview](#). Busy man!

Republican New York Rep. Peter King—who served under Speaker Gingrich—[told a reporter](#) last week, “[Gingrich has] a superiority complex—and I don't think he had that much to be superior about.”

In brainstorming notes unearthed in the 1997 House Ethics investigation of Gingrich, he had [scribbled](#): “Gingrich—primary mission: advocate of civilization, definer of civilization, teacher of the rules of civilization, arouser of those who fan civilization, organizer of the pro-civilization activists, leader (possibly) of the civilizing forces.”

David Boaz, a vice president at the libertarian Cato Institute—a hotbed of anti-Gingrich sentiment—told me, “My main concern is you don't want this guy's finger on the button. He is a megalomaniac and volatile.”

Yesterday morning on MSNBC, Joe Scarborough, who was an active member of the '94 GOP revolution, said bluntly, “Newt Gingrich is a bad person [politically].” Scarborough has turned his morning show into a passionate one-man “Stop Newt” campaign, ringing the alarm bell that Newt is dangerous.

Will anybody listen? To date, Gingrich is surging to the top of the polls, with potential voters seemingly impervious to Gingrich's dark side.

So far. Remember, a month ago it was Herman Cain who was riding high. Gingrich has had the good fortune of peaking late, after the other anti-Mitt contenders have crashed and burned.

Boaz sees Gingrich's top-tier status ending when voters are more informed about him. He says, “Most people have lives and don't follow politics that closely. People have short memories. His 15 minutes aren't up yet, but they will be. There has been this desperate search for the anti-Mitt Romney. Gingrich seems like a plausible national leader but he will shoot his mouth off and people will notice it. It will move people back to Romney when they realize [the truth] about Newt.”