All that Gingrich glitter is not gold: Newt pranked in Minneapolis

Aaron J Shuler, University of Oregon
He decries elitism and “a secular, socialist machine” on the American Left that “presents as great a threat to America as Nazi Germany once did,” while holding a doctorate in history from a private non-sectarian university.

He was out front in the impeachment of president for lying about extra-marital relations while he conducted his own affair.

He went to the hospital to ask his cancer-stricken wife for a divorce so he could marry the secretary he was cheating on her with, the Baptist turned Catholic explaining his indiscretion being engendered by “how passionately [he] felt about this country.”

His name is Newt Gingrich and he visited Minneapolis this week because he is running for president and was in the neighborhood down in Iowa.

His reception was mixed, and included a glitter shower from a man calling for an end to Mr. Gingrich’s divisive politics.

It was an unfortunate and juvenile stunt unworthy of a dignified political discourse that Mr. Gingrich handled with dignity and aplomb, brushing himself off and wryly noting that it was great to live in a free country.

But while crass and too common, the prank was perhaps somewhat apt metaphorically.

Mr. Gingrich has—or had—potential to be a thoughtful politician of substance. Scott Fitzgerald may not have thought there were second acts in American life, but there can be in American politics.

Nevertheless, Mr. Gingrich has repeatedly allowed his impetuousness to obviate a formidable intellect.

His equivocation on Libya betrayed a sole desire to contradict the President and belies the idea that his reasoned and realistic opposition to Paul Ryan’s Medicare plans is principled.

His contradiction of the Republicans’ golden boy du jour has turned many GOP kingmakers against him, including Charles Krauthammer who pronounced Mr. Gingrich’s presidential aspirations “done.”

Mr. Gingrich and his insincerity—even for a politician—are not likely to gain much traction in Minnesota either.

He may still be capable of trenchant policy analysis and a few flashy sound bytes, but few are likely to be fooled.

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