



Gingrich's Daughter Jackie on What Made Newt Cry

Dec 30, 2011 4:03 PM EST

By: Lloyd Grove

His team hopes Gingrich's Friday waterworks will be the flagging candidate's 'Hillary moment.' Lloyd Grove talks to the ex-speaker's younger daughter about what made Newt cry.

Jackie Cushman cried, too.

"I've tried to wipe off the streaks. Can you see my mascara? Is it OK?" asked Cushman, Newt Gingrich's younger daughter, after her father [burst into tears](#) during a campaign appearance Friday in Des Moines.

A few in the former House speaker's media entourage—who have been frantically crisscrossing the first caucus state of Iowa in a two-bus caravan—were buzzing that this could be "Newt's Hillary moment." That was a reference to Hillary Clinton's teary performance at a town meeting just before the 2008 New Hampshire primary—humanizing waterworks that may have given her a last-minute edge, and victory, over her then-bitter rival Barack Obama.

Maybe Gingrich, who's lagging at [the back of the pack](#) in the latest polls, only a few weeks after being the Iowa frontrunner, can redeem his flagging candidacy with a tactical show of emotion.

But Cushman, an author, syndicated columnist, and mother of two, reacted in more personal terms—that is, with the full knowledge that the deeply personal is entirely political during the hard-fought Republican presidential nominating contest.



Jackie Cushman, Newt Gingrich's daughter, speaks to Lloyd Grove about what made Newt cry., Newscom; Getty Images

Gingrich's tears were prompted when Republican pollster Frank Luntz, emceeding the event hosted by the nonpartisan mother-oriented group Moms Matter, asked the candidate about his late mother, Kathleen, who suffered from bipolar disease and other ailments as she spent her last days in a nursing home. Gingrich—known as a copious weeper in private, during tense closed-door meetings in the speaker's office—started sobbing when he talked about how his mother's condition prompted his interest in brain science. As the mostly female audience applauded and “awww”ed, he quickly regained his composure.

As Cushman wept along with her dad, her older sister, Kathy Lubbers—sitting with their stepmother, Callista Gingrich, in the front row at the landmark coffeehouse Java Joe's—passed some Kleenex up to the stage.

“It was really nice today to hear him speak from the heart,” Cushman said.

“It was really nice today to hear him speak from the heart,” Cushman said afterward. Portraying her famous father—best known for his bare-knuckled tactics—as an old softie, she recalled how he hoisted her on his shoulders when she and her sister were young and they'd go on nature hikes.

“When he was speaker, he always told Kathy and I that no matter what's happening, if you need me, call me on the phone. And he was always available to us.”

Cushman, who has been volunteering in her dad's political campaigns since age 7, breezily discounted the latest polls, arguing that half of Iowa voters have yet to make a decision four days away from the caucuses.

Asked how Gingrich is dealing with the hard knocks, including millions of dollars' worth of negative television advertising that battered his image and sent him into free fall, she said, "He's fine. It's exhausting physically. It's too bad that they [the negative ads] are run. It doesn't help anybody. The only person it helps is Barack Obama."

As for Newt's frame of mind: "He's enduring," she said. "He's got an incredible amount of persistence and willpower ... We're in this for the long haul."