



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on April 12, 2011

## Jackson Thinks Budget Debate Tantamount To Civil War

[The Daily Caller caught](#) Jackson's comments on MSNBC's Martin Bashear program and [posted a video](#) on You Tube.

[Said Jackson](#): "This really is a Civil War fight. This is making the federal government dysfunctional on the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. These guys will support three wars. They'll support tax dodgers. They'll support the wealthiest Americans getting tax breaks. They want to cut into education and health care. This is an ideological battle."



The thick-tongued Jackson doesn't seem to understand the guest host's questions and sounds as if he has a speech impediment. Nevertheless, he made his point, noting that the war over the budget was an ideological battle.

Unsurprisingly, the show's guest host asked whether Jackson thought the effort to trim the budget was "racist."

"I don't want to reduce it to that," [Jackson replied](#), again noting that GOP budget cutters were in a "mad dash to make government dysfunctional."

Then he reiterated his analogy to the War Between the States.

This is a Civil War fight. I think *Time* magazine has it right. This is the 150th anniversary of the 1861 Civil War. Now those are determined to shut the federal government down to make their point — their ideological-religious point. You have those who believe in states' rights and those who believe in a more perfect union, States' right are anti-civil rights, anti-workers' right to bargain, anti-social justice, pro-rich and significantly insensitive to poor people — that was the great divide 150 years ago and it's the great divide today in the ideological sense.

### **The War Between the States: The Cost**

It is unclear why Jackson used the analogy, beyond his merely grasping for something with which the viewer might be familiar. But the analogy is unsound.

The four years of fighting between North and South — this year being the sesquicentennial of the war's first shot — [ended in](#) more than 600,000 deaths. Total casualties likely exceeded 1 million. A quarter of Southern manhood was killed. Beyond that, [the war cost](#) \$8.2 billion dollars, about \$145 billion today adjusted for inflation.

As well, Union general Philip Sheridan [laid waste](#) to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, while his brother-in-arms William [Sherman erased](#) a 90-mile wide swath of territory from Atlanta to Savannah, Georgia. Federal soldiers ruthlessly destroyed millions of dollars in civilian property to crush the Confederacy.



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Beyond that, the war ended the common understanding of the relationship between the states and the federal government; i.e., that the states created the federal government, not the reverse, and that the federal government's powers are few and defined. The new understanding after the war was that the federal government's powers were many and for all intents and purposes unlimited.

In that sense, and to the degree conservatives want to change that, perhaps Jackson is right. The battle isn't merely one about multi-trillion-dollar budgets, but instead is one about the role the federal government ought to play, or not play, in the economy and people's lives.

*Photo: Jesse Jackson*



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