



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 16, 2011

MSNBC Host Ridiculed for Attack on Nullification

During a 14-minute segment entitled "[Confederates in the Attic](#)," the television host attempted — poorly and inaccurately — to smear advocates of states' rights and nullification. She used the 150th anniversary of the [battle of Fort Sumter](#) to essentially try to paint nullification supporters as racist "neo-Confederates" advocating another civil war.



The script almost could have been taken from a [parody](#) of anti-nullification zealots portrayed as zombies repeating tired, inaccurate arguments. "The Confederacy and its politics are in fashion again," Maddow warned before introducing her guest, "African-American studies" expert Melissa Harris-Perry.

The Yale professor and race profiteer then proceeded to support Maddow's implicit suspicions. "I think it would be foolish to imagine that this is uncorrelated with having an African-American President," Harris-Perry declared. And she ominously warned that people should "take it seriously," ludicrously suggesting that opposition to "big government" was simply veiled racism.

Ironically, the logic employed by the two talking heads during the segment backed them into an awkward corner: Either they condemn the Northern states' nullification of the Fugitive Slave Act — a federal statute that purported to mandate the return of escaped slaves to their masters — or they contradict their entire premise.

As respected historian Tom Woods — author of the book [Nullification: How to Resist Federal Tyranny in the 21st Century](#) — also noted in a powerful rebuttal, Maddow's argument fell flat in other areas, too. Also ironic, for example: Maddow cited South Carolina confederate leader John Calhoun's support of nullification as evidence of how the concept can lead to civil war.

She got it partially correct, but not in the way she thought. Apparently her researchers did not come across the fact that South Carolina listed Northern states' nullification of the Fugitive Slave Act as one of the grievances prompting secession. "I thought this was supposed to be a 'neo-Confederate' idea," Woods wrote sarcastically in the piece, entitled "[Rachel Maddow: Obey Your Overlords, Citizen.](#)"

Calling Maddow a "left-nationalist" and her viewers "delicate," Woods made a mockery of the segment, highlighting the dangers of centralizing power and historical examples of the tragedies it has led to. He also exposed some of Maddow's past statements as hypocritical in light of the nullification segment.

"By the way, some of us would have cheered if the states involved had tried to nullify the order to intern the Japanese in the US during World War II," Woods concluded. "Would Rachel Maddow, on the other hand, really have told us to shut up and obey our wise leaders, that nullification was a 'Confederate' idea? Some 'progressive'!"



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The Tenth Amendment Center, a group Maddow attacked that promotes nullification of unconstitutional federal power grabs, also demolished the arguments and highlighted the deception employed by Maddow and her guest. “So, is Rachel Maddow just a jerk, is she a liar, or is she ignorant? Hard to say,” [noted](#) Michael Boldin, the organization’s president. “Partisan hack comes to mind, but I think that’s too soft a term.”

Boldin suggested that the discredited TV personality deliberately misled her viewers. Among other distortions, Maddow carefully omitted the Tenth Amendment Center’s efforts to nullify unconstitutional federal mandates that “liberals” traditionally oppose, such as statutes purporting to criminalize marijuana or require national ID cards. Instead, she listed gun regulations, food safety, currency legislation, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Pundits shot down Maddow’s arguments, too, ridiculing her and MSNBC, and even attacking the channel’s parent company, war contractor General Electric.

“As Americans express renewed interest in the Constitution, as well as the philosophy of little-‘r’ republicanism as espoused by Mr. Jefferson and Madison’s Virginia & Kentucky resolution, the War-Industry via Old-Media outlets have taken the occasion of the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War to go on the attack spreading purposefully false information,” wrote radio host Mike Church. In the piece, entitled “GE War Machine Propaganda Arm, MSNBC Attempts to Smear Nullification Movement,” Church referred to Maddow as a “Rhodes-Scholar shill.”

In a video commentary entitled “[Liberals for Slavery](#),” conservative pundit Jack Hunter also lambasted Maddow for her incoherent and contradictory arguments against advocates of states’ rights. Hunter pointed out, for example, that confederate President Jefferson Davis specifically denounced nullification in his farewell address.

“If she is opposed to nullification and secession in each and every instance, as her rhetoric heavily implies, would liberals like Maddow have occasionally found themselves in the strange position of supporting slavery?” Hunter wondered.

Then, like columnist Selwyn Duke recently noted in a piece for [The New American](#), Hunter pointed out that California has already de-facto nullified federal drug laws. “Does Maddow believe residents in that state who are stricken with cancer or glaucoma deserve to be arrested for alleviating their pain with medicinal marijuana? Or does Maddow support nullification?” Hunter asked.

Bloggers highlighted the apparent ignorance displayed in the anti-nullification tirade, too. “Rachel Maddow doesn’t understand that Nullification and the threat of secession is part of our ‘Check and Balance’ system that assures the states that the Federal Government does not violate states’ rights,” wrote Larry Flinchpaugh at the Restore the Republic blog.

MSNBC’s public relations department referred questions to Maddow’s “manager of publicity,” Lauren Skowronski. By press time, she had not responded about whether Maddow would oppose nullification of the Fugitive Slave Act, or whether MSNBC planned to disclose [the fact that it is being subsidized by the federal government under ObamaCare](#), one of the [primary targets of nullification efforts](#).

Of course, this is not the first time Maddow has distorted reality to smear her opponents. In 2009, she launched [several inaccurate attacks](#) against [The John Birch Society](#). Other pundits on the network do it, too. Earlier this month, for example, self-described socialist MSNBC personality Lawrence O’Donnell was [exposed misleading his viewers](#) about Sen. Rand Paul’s position on Libya and the significance of a non-binding Senate resolution.



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As the Media Research Center recently pointed out in an [in-depth exposé](#), the “brazenly left-wing cable network” frequently and inappropriately attempts to link the conservative movement to the Confederacy, secession, and racism. In the process, according to critics, it continues to discredit itself while making a mockery of journalism and drifting further toward complete irrelevancy.

Photo of Rachel Maddow: AP Images



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