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End the Death Penalty

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The Opinion Pages | LETTER

End the Death Penalty

SEPT. 27, 2016

To the Editor:

Semon Frank Thompson's essay, "What I Learned From Executing Two Men" (Sunday Review, Sept. 18), revealed a further reason to put an end to the ultimate punishment. The death penalty is a broken system carried out by human beings that no amount of reform can repair.

Study after study demonstrates that it is imposed in a racially discriminatory manner and that it does not have any additional deterrent value than the punishment of life without the possibility of parole. The death penalty has been imposed erroneously in at least 150 cases.

Mr. Thompson's essay compels us to consider the collateral harm suffered by those who must carry out executions. Indeed, we are all harmed by state-ordered killings when no reliable study has demonstrated that there is any benefit to society.

This November, California voters have an opportunity to put an end to a failed and irrational system by supporting Prop 62. California would then join 20 other states and the District of Columbia in moving us to be, in Mr. Thompson's words, "a healthier society."

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