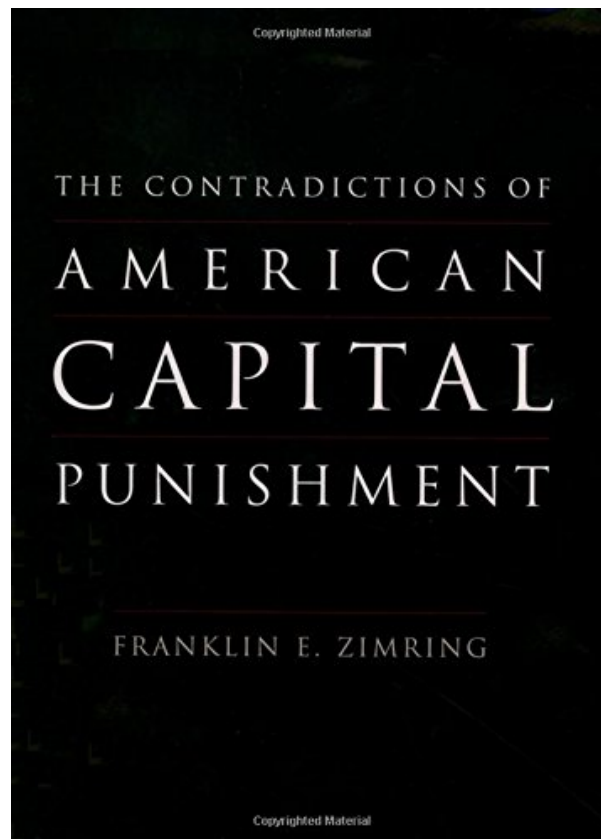


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"Zimring is doing more than making a case for or against; he's presenting an impressive array of facts, suggesting that the U.S. would be 'a better nation' if it exorcised those vigilante values."--Los Angeles Times Book Review

"A thought-provoking and genuinely original book which deserves to become a classic."--The Economist

About the Author

Franklin E. Zimring is the William G. Simon Professor of Law and Chair of the Criminal Justice Research Program at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of *Crime Is Not the Problem* and *American Youth Violence*.

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Why does the United States continue to employ the death penalty when fifty other developed democracies have abolished it? Why does capital punishment become more problematic each year? How can the death penalty conflict be resolved?

In *The Contradictions of American Capital Punishment*, Frank Zimring reveals that the seemingly insoluble turmoil surrounding the death penalty reflects a deep and long-standing division in American values, a division that he predicts will soon bring about the end of capital punishment in our country. On the one hand, execution would seem to violate our nation's highest legal principles of fairness and due process. It sets us increasingly apart from our allies and indeed is regarded by European nations as a barbaric and particularly egregious form of American exceptionalism. On the other hand, the death penalty represents a deeply held American belief in violent social justice that sees the hangman as an agent of local control and safeguard of community values. Zimring uncovers the most troubling symptom of this attraction to vigilante justice in the lynch mob. He shows that the great majority of executions in recent decades have occurred in precisely those Southern states where lynchings were most common a hundred years ago. It is this legacy, Zimring suggests, that constitutes both the distinctive appeal of the death penalty in the United States and one of the most compelling reasons for abolishing it.

Impeccably researched and engagingly written, *Contradictions in American Capital Punishment* casts a clear new light on America's long and troubled embrace of the death penalty.

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Features

- Capital
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"Frank Zimring's book will revolutionize how we understand the death penalty in the United States. Why, Zimring asks, does capital punishment persist in America, almost uniquely among established democracies, despite entrenched unfairness and the virtual inevitability of error? His original and provocative answer is America's vigilante tradition. Like vigilante action, the death penalty suffers from the biases of the dominant social group and the unwarranted assumption that the guilty have been correctly identified. Highlighting this uncomfortable comparison offers a promising new approach for those committed to ending this inhumane institution of American life."

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"Frank Zimring's new book makes a major contribution to understanding the present situation of the death penalty in the United States and to predicting what lies ahead. Central to his analysis is his judgment that a "fundamental value conflict" lies at the root of the struggle: Will America's frontier "vigilante values" that support our death penalty practices survive their collision with our attachment to "due process" values? Written in his characteristically lively style, this provocative and completely original work has much to teach both defenders and opponents of capital punishment."

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