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The power of Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden

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Regarding the July 31 front-page articles "[Manning acquitted of aiding the enemy](#)" and "[Snowden's father offers firm defense of his son](#)":

As someone who thinks the net effect of Bradley Manning's and Edward Snowden's disclosures was positive for the country, I'm glad that these major stories came out together.

It's remarkable that Mr. Snowden and his father have the background they do and that the father is saying what he is. I wholly agree with his comments. Although the younger Mr. Snowden has done his image no good by seeking asylum from countries such as Russia and Venezuela, I don't believe he deserves any more than a minimal punishment. It is both embarrassing and humorous that Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. has said the government would not torture Mr. Snowden if he returns to the United States, given the government's shameful treatment of Mr. Manning for months.

As for Mr. Manning, he should receive only a nominal punishment as a way to hold the Obama administration accountable for the months of abusive conduct toward him, which amounted to forms of torture and deliberate humiliation by any rational definition. There was something symbolic and richly metaphorical in the front-page picture of the diminutive Manning in his neat uniform moving between deadpan-faced human behemoths in anonymous dress.

Ron Thompson, Fairfax

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Regarding the July 31 front-page article "[Civil liberties groups predict Assange will also be prosecuted](#)":

Elizabeth Goitein, co-director of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, advised that the conviction of Bradley Manning for espionage will have a "chilling effect" on those with a self-styled higher purpose who wish to commit such criminal acts. I hope so. A chilling effect — that is, deterrence — is one of the principal purposes of criminal law, and without it the law is merely a joke.

