

## THE HUMAN RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT AS AN IDENTITY OF THE AMERICAN QUAKERS IN THE ERAS BEFORE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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### ABSTRAK

*Makalah ini membahas bagaimana dan mengapa kaum Quaker bersinggungan dengan isu-isu hak asasi manusia (HAM) di Amerika Serikat sebelum abad ke-20, mulai dari pertengahan abad ke-17 sampai dengan pertengahan abad ke-19. Makalah ini disajikan dengan menggunakan teori interdisipliner milik Nash Smith sebagai pendekatan teoretisnya. Kaum Quaker, sebagai sebuah kelompok agama Kristen, mempunyai beberapa ciri atau identitas sejak didirikan oleh George Fox di Inggris pada pertengahan abad ke-17. Beberapa di antaranya adalah mereka hidup sederhana, menganut prinsip pasifisme, menolak membayar pajak negara dan gereja, menolak melepas topi, menggunakan bahasa arkais, dan sebagainya. Identitas-identitas ini bertambah lagi sejak kaum Quaker muncul di Amerika, yakni upaya penegakan prinsip HAM yang muncul sepanjang era sebelum abad ke-20. Upayanya ini didorong oleh kesalehan dan loyalitas Quaker terhadap teologi Quakerisme. Dengan kata lain, upaya penegakan ini merupakan suatu pengejawantahan dari teologi tersebut yang tercermin melalui sikap, pemikiran, dan tindakan mereka di dalam merespon berbagai isu terkait dengan HAM kaum-kaum minoritas seperti kaum Indian atau Pribumi Amerika, Afro-Amerika, dan perempuan. Tujuan utamanya adalah memperjuangkan ketiga kaum tersebut untuk dapat menikmati HAM mereka seperti yang sudah dan sedang dinikmati oleh kaum kulit putih.*

**Kata Kunci:** *HAM, interdisipliner, kaum Quaker, kelompok agama, Quakerisme*

### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how and why the Quakers dealt with human rights issues in the United States before 20<sup>th</sup> century, ranging from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It applies Nash Smith's interdisciplinary theory as a theoretical approach. The Quakers, as a Christian religious group, had got several features or identities since George Fox declared its existence in England in the mid of 17<sup>th</sup> century. They lived in simplicity, adopted the principle of pacifism, rejected paying tith and tax, rejected taking off hat, used archaic words, and so forth. However, the Quakers in the United States had shown a new feature or identity; namely, the enforcement of human rights in the eras before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The human rights enforcement was motivated by their piety and loyalty to the Quakerism. In other words, it was an expression of their belief in Quakerism. This theology empowered their thoughts and actions in responding issues pertaining to human rights of the minorities i.e. the Indians or Native Americans, the African-Americans, and women along the span of time. Their goal was to let the minorities enjoy their unalienable rights as what most of white men had enjoyed.

**Keywords:** human rights, interdisciplinary, Quakerism, Quakers, religious group

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## INTRODUCTION

Human rights enforcement is an effort or action conducted by an individual or a group of people to make sure that those being marginalized by certain social-political authorities can enjoy their rights freely. It is necessary as the marginalized deserves freedom of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Human rights are the ones being inherent in the selfness of each individual, meaning that they are automatically obtained as soon as a man is born to the world (Suseno, 1999:121). Consequently, everyone has power, claim, immunity, and privilege to his body and life (Darby, 2006:56). His rights are not provided by a state or social system where he has been living (Moyn, 2010:12), contrary to what is generally conceptualized by socialist groups. Unlike that of the socialist, the concept of human rights proposed above refers to the liberal one and has been developed in the United States in the formal social-political system since the declaration of independence. The *Declaration of Independence* (1776) states that:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government... (Hollinger and Capper, 2001:134).

The liberal view of human rights in accordance with Jefferson's conceptualization, roots in the Enlightenment mode of philosophical thoughts arising in Europe in the seventeenth century and reaching its peak in the eighteenth century by the issuance of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) in France and the *Declaration of Independence* in the United States. John Locke was one of the prominent and influential figures in the Enlightenment philosophical thought. He believes that the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property are natural rights or pre-social

rights operating inherently in all human beings in accordance with the natural law. So, when human is born to the world, he carries with him all those rights automatically. Those rights work as "built-in ethic of dignity" in each selfness of all human beings regardless of their natural differences (Montgomery, 2007:117).

The human rights enforcement attributed through thoughts and actions will become an embedded feature or identity of someone or a particular group of people provided that the thoughts and actions reveal consistently, intensively, and continuously in regard to human rights issues during a certain period of time. This may happen due to an institutional factor which drives them to take the actions. Sairin (2010:12) perceives that it is culture in sense of system of knowledge. In other words, knowledge system plays an pivotal and active role as a blue print in determining any patterns of behavior, attitude, action, custom, and tradition figured out by all individuals in a society.

In the United States the Quaker group is identified as the one conducting consistently the human rights enforcement. The Quaker group is a religious sect and or denomination in Christianity born in England in the mid of 17<sup>th</sup> century, or in 1652 to be precise (Bacon, 1969:13). It was founded by George Fox as his personal reaction of dissatisfaction to the role of religion during his era which was headed by the Church of England. He viewed that the religion missed the spirituality side at all, and gave emphasis on formal and mundane affairs only. Following its establishment in England, this group proceeded to spread to other parts of the world, to the New World in particular. It gained recognition when Elizabeth Harris was known to visit Maryland in 1655. A year later, in 1656, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin came to the United States to strengthen Harris' presence and harbored in Boston, Massachusetts colony. Despite many barriers and obstacles, the Quakers could finally appear as one of the American entities in the seventeenth century and afterward, even up to the present. Its existence was further proved factually and formally by

William Penn, the Quakers' representative, since he could found a big colony in Pennsylvania in 1682. He headed the Pennsylvania colony through his view on Quakerism because, to him, a government was a part of religion (Penn, 1682:A1). In spite of that, this colony was not entrapped in form of theocratic system, but democratic one. As a result, the colony became one of the most multicultural and democratic colonies where the human rights of all entities were acknowledged and protected.

This paper attempt to explain how the concept of human rights coexists with the Quakers in the United States. It will discuss the Quakers' efforts or actions to enforce human rights prior to the twentieth century, particularly during the period between mid of 17<sup>th</sup> century to mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is to show that the human rights enforcement denotes to be one of the Quaker's identities so that it makes the group as a distinctive one among the other groups in the US, and to provide evidences that their efforts are somewhat driven by the Quakerism.

This paper applies Henry Nash Smith's interdisciplinary theory as the theoretical approach. Smith argues that:

The best thing we can do, in my opinion, is to conceive American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry. This implied a sustained effort of the student of literature to take account of sociological, historical, and anthropological data and methods, and of the sociologist or the historian to take account of the data and methods of scholarship in the fields of the arts (Kwiat and Turpie, 1980:14).

Thus, this paper may be a rather "wide space" in dealing with the topic under discussion since it puts together series of data or information from several disciplines into one coherent analysis. The main disciplines in use are history and literature. In other words, the historical and literary perspectives go hand in hand for the sake of achieving a comprehensive analysis on the topic. Collaborating those two disciplines, as Adi (1998) said, can bring

about a comprehensive view on the human rights enforcement serving as Quakers' identity.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT AS THE QUAKERS' IDENTITY**

Identity, from Latin word "*identitatem*" (Barnhart, 2002:371), refers to the "state of becoming identical, absolute sameness, exact likeness" (Hornby, 1974:421). In other words, identity is "a characteristic, feature, or sign" belonging inherently to one person or thing since it modifies that person or thing. When someone sees a sign served as the identity, he/she directly remembers its owner.

The Quaker definitely have had some identities. The Quaker group has been a very distinguished religious group or denomination in the United States since in its early years of existence owing to a number of traditions that are different from those of the other groups or denominations. The traditions become identities since the group came into being as a denomination or religious group in England. Despite the evolution, the Quakers' identities encompass (1) living in simplicity, (2) adopting the principle of pacifism or non-violence, (3) rejecting paying tith and tax, (4) rejecting taking off hats in any formal situation, (5) using archaic words such as *thou* or *thee* instead of *you*, and (6) rejecting greetings or salutation. These traditions are the Quakers' commonly shared identities across the time and place around the world.

Identity plays an important role for any social groups in the United States. Eck (2005) states that the United States has always been very heterogenous since early years. It is a home for people of different nations, religions, and convictions. Martin Marty claims that America is an accumulation of nations and denominations (1979:50). Similarly, Lidz (2010) offers a more specific notion that American nation has been conditioned a very long time with a situation of denominational religiosity.

American religions do not expect to coincide

with the society in membership, as all are minorities. Few stand in sectarian opposition to the social order. Most broadly accept American institution – their democratic aspects, economic activism, and relative openness to social mobility – while remaining critical of particular policies and institutions. They also expect recognition and acceptance for themselves and their members on a basis of formal equality (Lidz, 2010:82).

The presence of denominational pattern as a social phenomenon in American was, in fact, initiated by the migration of the White from Europe to the New World in the seventeenth century. The Puritans supported that fact. The coming of the Puritan was driven by a motive not only to pursue better life but also to develop and disseminate the doctrine of Christianity. Puritanism was different from the rest in England, so it was banned and stigmatized as dissenters.

The natural condition in America, on the other hand, supported the survival of dissenters. It should be seen positively rather than negatively for strengthening the pluralistic and democratic views in social context. Stein (2003:11) argues that “Dissent is not by definition a bad thing. Much of our nation’s history is the positive product of dissent. The nation’s founders protested unfair governance by England, revolted, and created a democratic society”. In fact, America was the main target of settlement for European immigrants in seventeenth century. In other words, it became “a fermenting vat” (Holmes, 2004:4) for the immigrants most of whom were dissenters.

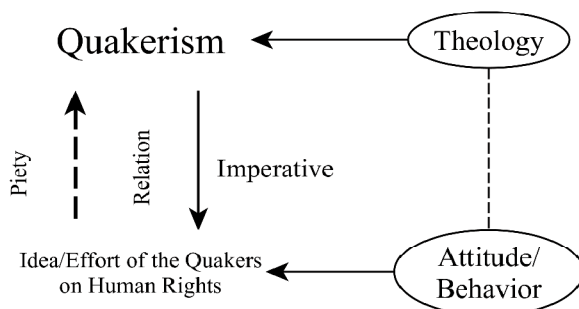
The Quakers’ features or identities underwent evolution due to the influence from the main point of Quakerism. The Quakerism in this regard functions as not only theology but also ideology for the Quakers, which subsequently determines their knowledge system or culture. It is important for all Quakers and their communities to have it no matter where and when they live; it is borderless both

in time and in space. Thus, the Quakers become an example suggesting that a society can be in the form of Durkheim’s “society divinized” (Coser, 1971:138; Moore, 1997:56). Most aspects of the Quakers’ lives, both individually and socially, are incompatible with the teachings of Quakerism. In other words, Quakerism serves as the cornerstone of their activism.

The theology, therefore, makes the Quakers’ society to be divinized and certainly plays an important role in defining the social phenomena in all Quakers’ communities. This happens because they believe that Jesus Christ lives ever after in the hearts of all human beings and can be contacted any time they need Him for Mercy. The belief that God is within the hearts is known as the Inner Light or the Inward Light. George Fox described the Inner Light by saying “The Lord God opened to me by His invisible power that every man was enlightened by divine Light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all, and they that believed in it came out of condemnations to the Light of life” (Fox, 1904:33). This belief leads the Quakers to view that all human beings, regardless of their natural differences, are equal and have the same potency to contact with God.

More specifically, Quakerism influences the Quakers’ thoughts, attitudes, and actions including campaign for human rights. It definitely serves as “model of” Geertz (1973) or “Golden Rule Friends” (Hamm, 2003) for the human rights enforcement. This is in line with Roslewicz who claims that “Quakerism was the cornerstone of [their] activism” (1999:19). It works in cultural context in the way the Quakerism posits at imperative relation to the Quakers’ lives. The Quakers are supposed to explicate the humanistic value in their lives as a form of piety to the belief on Quakerism. In this regard, the human rights enforcement is a manifestation of their beliefs. The following scheme shows the reciprocal relation between Quakerism and the Quakers’ actions on human rights.

**Picture 1**  
**Relation between Quakerism**  
**and the Quakers' actions**



The scheme strengthens the notion that Quakerism functions as a theology or as a cornerstone for the Quakers on which they build their attitudes or behaviors, such as focusing their attention and effort on the human rights enforcement. The Quakers put this action as an imperative obligation, so their actions in accordance with the principles of human rights can serve as an immanent measurement for their piety. The more consistent and outspoken they struggle for the human rights enforcement, the deeper and stronger they have conviction and commitment to theology of Quakerism. The theology, in this case, serves in the long run as the Quakers' collective consciousness.

With the existence of the Quakerism as model of in the Quakers' collective consciousness, the enforcement of human rights becomes the Quakers' habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) since the actions are going consistently and continuously in the history of America prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of such habitus existing likewise in such range of time, it can then be said to become the Quakers' identity, the same as the ones the Quakers had been practicing since they firstly existed in England. Moreover, they show a much bigger concern on the human rights than their being a minority among the American people. The Quakers make up only about 1/30 of the America's population (Hamm, 2003:151).

Hoare (2000) states that there are in two kinds of experiences, the Quakers' communities i.e. the inward experiences and outward experiences, which are related to, or even dependent on one another. In

relation to human rights enforcement, the Quakers' identity is seen as not only a part of their outward experiences but also an implementation of the inward experiences. The human rights enforcement is a social fact in the American society which is highly multicultural. It can be compared to the polygamy tradition in the Mormons.

George Fox was the pioneer of human rights enforcement with the spirit of the Quakerism. He was a central figure for the Quaker during his time and afterwards. His words and deeds, as well as his stance and act to the minority, became references for the Quakers or the converts. He firstly directed his stance and action toward the Indians and African-Americans in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The two minority groups had been treated as objects of annexation and enslavement by the Whites in the New World. George Fox viewed annexation and slavery as inhuman social facts and contradictory to the universal values. The objects of those inhumane practices were looked as enemies and their rights were denied. They were treated like animals. Tocqueville's (2005) named the Indians as the savages and the Negroes as property, and this condition were their natural fates. He further said in terms of the enslavement of the Negroes that unlike others, the Negroes no longer had intentions, ideals, nor hopes of bliss. The Negroes therefore should understand that they had no rights to their bodies and souls upon their birth because they automatically belonged to their masters or the white people (Tocqueville, 2005:343). The description mentioned by Tocqueville above is really confirmed with what George Fox had really seen directly in America when he visited the land several years after the Quakerism was publicly announced as a new Christian sect and religious belief. He then said that slavery is really a practice of inhuman system and therefore has to be abolished.

His stance to the slavery is very overt then because Quakerism leads him to promote egalitarianism. George Fox, in this case, was eager to spread spirit of love and brotherhood to all people he found during his life since the Inner Light (Jesus Christ) taught him that thing through his conscience

whenever he contacted Him. Slavery is certainly opposite to spirit of that divine love, so it must be rejected. To show his overt rejection, George Fox soon sent a letter entitled “To Friends Beyond The Sea, That Have Blacks and Indian Slaves” (1657) to the Quakers in America after his coming back from the New World. Through his letter Fox overtly reminded the Quakers that all humans are creatures of God and that they should spread love to every one they get along with just like Jesus Christ. He even let himself be sacrificed for his love to all humans. Fox wrote:

And the gospel is preached to every creature under heaven, which is the power that giveth liberty and freedom, and is glad tidings to every captivated creature under the whole heaven. And the word of God is in the heart and mouth, to obey and do it, and not for them to ascend or descend for it; and this is the word of faith which was and is preached (<http://qhpress.org>).

Besides their concern on the human right issues becomes the Quakers’ identity, this conduct can also become as a part of Gospel mission having been developed as soon as they existed in the New World. Along with this stance, the Quakers attempted to get attentions from the American society, including the Indians and the African-Americans who were alienated in that land. Unlike the majority of the white people, the Quakers proposed the importance of elevating those groups’ rights and freeing them from such stigmatized calls as the uncivilized, savages, and heathens. As Gordon (1964:86) says that the dominant white people likely have the privileges to control and enslave them totally.

Despite the fact that George Fox, the central figure of all Quakers’ societies especially in 17<sup>th</sup> century, had shown his antipathy to both Indians and African-Americans, the American Quakers focused their attentions and defenses only on the Indians’ lives in the following years of seventeenth century. The African-Americans were not a large group at that times although the action of servitude to that group had already been practiced as a social and economical system. Besides, the main

issue in seventeenth century was the confrontation between the white people and the Indians, or the immigrants and the natives. Therefore, the Quakers who came as a part of the European immigrants in that era focused their attention more on the native Americans who were colonized.

Their enforcement effort takes the form of practical view and treatment toward the Indians as friends and neighbors in which the nuance of equality and mutual respect between one another prevailed. Among the historical evidences for this is William Penn’s proposal for a special program, i.e., buying the lands of the Indians instead of annexing them in the way most of the white used to do. He even recommended all people in Pennsylvania to be tolerant to the Indians and put aside any negative stigmas embedded to them (Josephy, 1968:5). Along with these efforts, the Gospel mission seen through his Holy Experiment could be said successful during his two-year ruling in Pennsylvania. Thanking to those efforts, he did not meet significant obstacles nor difficulties from the Indians. Interestingly, the spirit of human rights enforcement pioneered by William Penn was then prolonged and proclaimed to be a “new decision” by a small group of the Quakers in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1688. This Quaker group rejected the slavery and slave trade on any marginalized groups like the Indians and the Negroes. The overt stance was released several years after William Penn stepped down from the governorship. This fact underlines that the Quakers’ sympathy for both minorities went on succeeding the spirit of the early figures.

Hamm (2003:33) stated that William Penn’s efforts serve as the foundation for the next American history in elevating human rights of the minority groups. William Penn was recognized as the first figure to explicate it as the spirit of the Pennsylvanian social system. Hamm said “More important, it was the first time that the white in the colonies had recognized to defend Native Americans [Indian] rights”. However, the Quakers’ success in defending and enforcing the human rights could not be negated from any support and

endorsement from other religious groups like German Mennonites and Moravians who facilitated them to found an association named “The Friendly Associations for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures”. This association was headed by William Penn who worked actively to approach and negotiate with the Indians especially in the process of buying and holding the Indians’ lands around Pennsylvania colony (Hamm, 2003:33).

Another prominent American Quaker in the early years of the eighteenth century, John Woolman, also held the same vision toward the Indians. Through his Journal, he shared his very deep sympathy to the Indians’ lives. His sympathy led him to love them and defend their rights when the Europeans insisted to colonize them. Woolman viewed those who colonized or annexed them as lacking brotherly love. They were ethnocentric and relied only on their own eyes in looking at the differences of the Indians. Unlike the rest, Woolman made a contact and friendship with the Indians and he was more convinced that they were simply civilized, so he defended them from annexation.

Despite the Quakers’ struggle to defend the Indians, the hegemonic power of the whites to the Indians continued through the nineteenth century. The hegemony grew much more severe, for it was systematically designed by the political power. President Andrew Jackson, through his *Removal Act* (1830), implied that colonizing and annexing the Indians are the forms of the “American nation’s historic mission” (Todd and Curti, 1972:316). It means that the actions are legal in all perspectives, including from the moral perspective. It serves as an implementation of the Manifest Destiny although it consequently results in the “Trail of Tears” for the Indians. However, the Quakers like Elizabeth Chandler and Lucretia Mott outspokenly protested the policy in 1830s. Through their works such as poems and essays, they defended the Indians’ rights by saying that the Indians were truly the natives of American lands so they had the rights to all lands they ever had had. Those Quakers did not consider

at all how the minorities’ colors, lives and cultures were so that their voices cried out were totally reflecting their Quakerism believing that all humans are equal and have the same potency to contact God through their consciences. No one therefore can negate the others.

Besides the enforcement of the Indians’ human rights, the Quakers also directed their actions to defend the African-Americans from the slavery system especially when slavery started to become the *Zeitgeist* of America in antebellum era. Slavery became a system in almost all parts of America. Carrying the same mood, the efforts to enforcing the African-Americans’ rights are actually the continuation of George Fox’ visions, the Quakerism. The activity started in the early years of the eighteenth century, generated by the literate and intellectual figures like John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, Elias Hicks, and many others.

These figures were against the slavery, conducting campaigns through various formal meetings or forums and propaganda through such printed media as pamphlets and letters to raise public sentiment. They even refused to use any products made by the slave and also founded the education hubs for the African-Americans (Plank, 2009:70). They had the same idea with George Fox toward the slavery system that it is a human evil, crime, and sinful deed. John Woolman expressed his idea as follows:

I was desirous that Friends might petition the Legislature to use their endeavors to discourage the future importation of slaves, for I saw that this trade was a great evil and tended to multiply troubles, and to bring distresses on the people for whose welfare my heart was deeply concerned (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>).

Considering slavery as a human crime and sinful deed, the Quakers asserted that such action is altogether contradictory with the universal principles of human rights where all human kinds are equal regardless of their natural distinctions like race, ethnicity, skin color, sex, and so on. This view is strengthened by Stanley Elkins (1976:59) saying that in the enslavement the African-Americans did

not have civil rights at all and were only treated by their masters as property, meaning that the more the masters had the Negro slaves, the richer they would be considered. Elkins' complete statement is:

A slave is in absolute bondage; he has no civil right, and can hold no property, except at the will and pleasure of his masters. He could neither give nor receive gifts; he could make no will, nor could he, by will, inherit anything. He could not hire himself out or make contracts for any purpose – even including, as we have seen, that of matrimony – and thus neither his word nor his bond had any standing in law. He could buy or sell nothing at all, except as his master's agent, could keep no cattle, horses, hogs, or sheep.

The Quakers is, therefore, a very significant and avant-garde group in executing the anti-slavery movement. The movement reached its peak in the nineteenth century, the most prominent period called “the antebellum era” in the American history. In this era, John Whittier and James Mott representing the Quakers became the central figures to join the American Anti-Slavery Movement founded by William Lloyd Garrison the in 1833. This organization is important because it was the biggest and the most influential both politically and socially at that time. Their involvement was then a real evidence that the Quakers was never absent in the process of the human rights enforcement, in particular the anti-slavery. Supporting the spirit and vision of the movement, the two Quaker figures viewed that slavery was definitely not in line with the Chistian theology as well as the human right principles. Their views underline the Quaker figures of the earlier times either in England or in America.

In addition to joining anti-slavery movement, several other Quaker figures in this era also extended the spirit of abolitionism using different method, namely the Undergorund Railroad, the clandestine network for liberating the slaves. The latter had no direct relation to the political change, but it was quite effective in that the Negroes could get their freedom more quickly and directly. Among the Quakers who joined the Underground Railroad are Thomas Garrett and Levi Coffin. With strong

committment and bravery, they co-operated with other figures to liberate and save the fugitive slaves from the slave hunters and slave catchers so that the slaves could step their feet as free men in the Northern parts of America and Canada where they automatically got their freedom. They were no longer slaves and got their natural and unalienable rights as God's creatures. In her prominent role in liberating slaves, Harriet Beecher Stowe, an abolitionist novelist in that era, was able to vividly portray it in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) through a character named Mr. Halliday, together with his family.

Furthermore, the nineteenth century or the antebellum era becomes the very crucial momentum in the American history to observe whether or not the Quakers were consistent in the human rights enforcement. In this era the Quakers, along with other social groups, conducted two kinds of efforts in the human rights enforcement. They are, firstly, joining the anti-slavery movement, and secondly, the initiation of the emancipation for women' rights. Thus, the proposed thesis that the human rights enforcement is the Quakers' identity in the United States before the twentieth century is justified.

Holding several kinds of efforts in the women's rights enforcement, the Quakers again appeared as an important and avant-garde group. They became the pioneers and the activists of the emancipation movement which was identified later as the first and liberal feminist movement in the United States and in the world. Sarah Grimke, Angelina Grimke, Elizabeth Chandler, Lucretia Mott, John Whittier were the most central and active figures of the group contributing the presence of the movement. They collaborated with non-Quaker figures for the sake of achieving women's equality and same opportunity with men. The goal was to end the patriarchal system domination.

They all agree that woman is created equal and becomes free agent having the same rights as man. Sarah Grimke and Angelina Grimke pinpoint that woman has good morality and is a responsible creature so that she plays a significant role in human



life. She is supposed to have the same rights as that of man. They put this idea in their letters when they had a correspondence with other prominent figures, such as Catherine Beecher and Mary S Parker (Hollinger and Capper, 20001:269). By saying that woman is equal to and has the same rights as man, these Quaker intellectuals relieved woman from a social hegemony that placed her as “pretty toys”, “instrument of pleasure”, and “mere second hand agent”. Those terms, according to them, are degrading and subordinating the woman’s position and humiliating the real postulate rooted in the Biblical teachings that woman is a free agent as well as a moral and accountable creature.

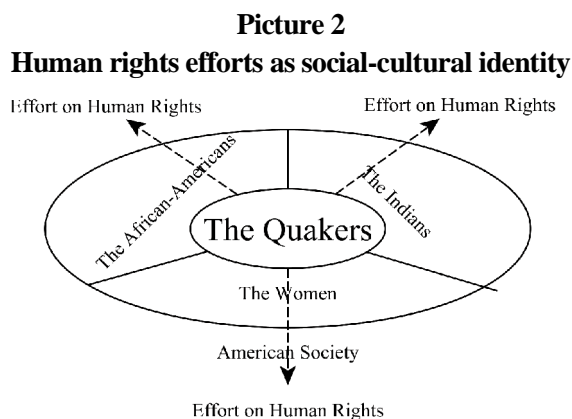
Due to their great concerns on women’s condition in that time, the Quaker figures are actors of the human rights enforcement. There are two major reasons for calling them actors. First, they were aware of the women’s condition which was more severe than the slavery experienced by the Negroes. Women faced double obstacles at the same time: they were both politically and socially discriminated and also under men’s subordination in domestic domain. Second, they realized that their conditons were contradictory with the Quakerism teaching and the Quakers’ traditions where women had equal rights and opportunities with men. In his *Testimony of Quality* George Fox asserted:

And as man and woman are restored again, by Christ, up into the image of God, they both have dominion again in Righteousness and Holiness, and are helps-meet, as before they fell (<http://www.quaker.org>).

As a consequence, the Quakers did many efforts, although still sporadic, to encourage woman emancipation movement in that era. Despite having many obstacles and challenges from the status-quo, especially from the Church ministers, the Quakers kept on campaigning the issue of woman’s equality and rights. The problem of gender issue grew more complicated and rose to the surface in 1840. No longer was it the concern of the Quaker intellectuals only, but also for non-Quakers. It was initiated by an incident in the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in England. In this convention,

all women delegates were not allowed to sit in and participate. That made the women activists, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, agreed to organize a convention for woman which was then held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. This convention is later known as the momentum for the birth of the first feminist movement whose main focus is on the enforcement of the women’s basic rights both as God’s creatures and as the American citizens.

Accordingly, the human rights enforcement is undeniably serving as the Quakers’ identity during the eras before the twentieth century. The Quakers have shown it consistently in different places and periods. From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the Quakers enforced the rights of the Indians or native Americans, the African-Americans, and the women. Below is the scheme showing their role in human rights enforcement for different groups:



The scheme above shows that the human rights enforcement comes out from the internal side of this group which can afterward be seen by all people in American society. This identity more relatively prevails in social-cultural life rather than in political one; therefore, along with it, the Quakers become distinctive among other social entities in American society. The Quakers’ action on human rights can also be “mnemonic culture” (Mack, 1991:228) for all people in American society so that they may have concerns on the human rights issues. Besides, the human rights enforcement can be regarded as a compass (blue print) for all Quakers because, in so doing, they believe that they have done “God’s

mandates” (Calvert, 2009:47) to the human beings especially in America.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the human rights enforcement is a new trait and/or character of the Quakers. It appeared in America consistently and across time and space during the eras before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was based on and stimulated by the Quakerism as the main guiding spirit. In other words, the human rights enforcement is a manifestation of their piety in their theological beliefs or religion. Religion, in this regard, serves as a collective consciousness and leads their thought and behavior in accordance with the religious teachings. To the Quakers, the human rights enforcement is simply an expression of their Quakerism. As a result, the vision and action of enforcing human rights remain strong in America throughout the eras before the 20<sup>th</sup> century ranging from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Represented by their prominent American figures like George Fox, William Penn, John Woolman, John Whittier, Lucretia Mott, etc., the Quakers focused their attentions on defending the basic rights of the Indians or Native Americans, the African-Americans, and the women from the annexation, slavery, and discrimination by the whites’ hegemony.

### Notes:

- 1 Henry Nash Smith is a scholar of American Studies program in 1940s and theorized interdisciplinary theory or approach applied in this program along with some other scholars in ‘Myth and Symbol School’. This theory was initially mentioned in his paper entitled “Can American Studies Develop Method?”

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