Name: Nwokoro Chinwendu Ifeoma

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Citizen’s roles in a democracy {chapter8}

People have the collective rights to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of the government is derived from the will of the people in their choice of these systems, and these people have the right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. Note that the government belongs to the people, the governmental process belongs to the people there is no way there will be any democratic engagement without the idea of the citizens. It can take tangible forms to improve the lives of citizens, the citizen’s engagement includes the purses economic, social, cultural and political development. Citizens must understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government.

 Citizenship has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Citizens have the rights and responsibilities which also includes in the participation of decision that affects the public welfare. Citizens of a state can also be acquired by birth or by naturalization.

Citizenship can be divided into

1. Civil citizenship
2. Political citizenship
3. Social citizenship.

Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty, e.g., freedom of speech, justice etc.

Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power e.g. a voter

The social citizenship, it embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

Brannan et. al. argues that the different concept of citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity. Citizenship is about being willing to get involved while involvement in local clubs and societies is seen as valuable, they argue that the involvement must speak of public-mindedness and have a purpose beyond that of a small group of people.

Citizens’ rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In other to let citizens have a share in the running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the right of other citizens in the state. Rights entails the duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in the constitution includes

1. The right to life
2. The right to work
3. Right to freedom of religion
4. Right to education
5. Right of association
6. Right of freedom of speech
7. Writing and publication among others etc.

Democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos meaning people and kratos” there is no single definition of democracy but what can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy, here are the features

1. The fundamental rights of the citizens is general
2. Independence and impartial judgment
3. Existence of the rule of law
4. Freedom of press
5. Periodic election that is free and fair

Citizens do not only have rights, they also have duties to perform, they recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work, the government of the people demands consistent support. Citizens are expected to perform the following responsibility

1. A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes
3. A citizen must have a duty to obey the law
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism but must prepare to offer constructive alternative to governmental policies
5. A good citizen must refrain from the interference with the rights of other members of the community

Democracy is a system lo f government where citizens directly elect the government by voting, it is also a system of government by the people, of the people and for the people it is known and considered as the best government.