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Course GSE 203

Assignment

Chapter 8: Citizens Roles In A Democracy

Introduction:

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choice of these systems. These precepts are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitution the world over. They capture the foundation for the famous formulation that democracy is "of the people, by the people and for the people". There is no democracy without the participation of citizens. There are barriers to citizen participation, they are both subtle and obvious, small and formidable and for citizenship to be achieved these barriers must be removed ^{whether} ~~if~~ they are based on race, age, e.t.c

Conceptual Clarifications: Citizen/Citizenship

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship refers to participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a voter or a politician. Social citizenship refers the claims that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence. Citizenship has many definitions made by many scholars but we can say citizenship is a privilege status conferred by states on its people either by birth or by naturalisation.

Citizen's Rights

Individual's rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it

exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order to let the 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 rights of other citizens in the state. Rights entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. A right is a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in its constitution includes the right to life, right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right to association and right to freedom of speech.

Democracy

Etymologically the word democracy is derived from the Greek word "demos" meaning people and "kratos" meaning rule, that is "rule by the people". The concept of democracy originated from Ancient Greece where every citizen was expected to participate in the running of government. This can also be called a direct democracy where people exercise authority themselves. Today democracy which is also known as indirect government is associated with the free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes. Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a government ~~of the people~~ ^{of the people} by the people and for the people. Democracy is the fundamental rights of the citizens guaranteed, independent and impartial ~~justice~~ judiciary, existence of rule of law, freedom of press and a periodic election that is free and fair.

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

- 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 criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
- 5) A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
- 6) A good citizen must support public education in every way possible, through the payment of taxes, through local volunteer efforts.