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Review on Citizens Roles in a Democracy (Chapter 8)

**INTRODUCTION**

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have right to choose their government, political and electoral systems as a part of self-determination. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choices of these systems, the people also have a right to participate in their government through elections to determine who will legally occupy the government office.

**CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

It is important to clarify some concepts as used within the content of this paper.

* Citizen/Citizenship

This term has a political meaning which implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities. Citizenship of a state can be acquired by birth or naturalization.

Citizenship can be said to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship. However, citizenship does not have just one definition, it means different things to different people and there are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as well.

* Citizens’ Rights

Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. Therefore, can be defined as a privilege conferred by law upon a person or group. Some of the rights citizens are entitled to in Nigeria are;

1. Right to life.
2. Right to freedom of religion.
3. Right to education.
4. Freedom of speech and so on.

* Democracy

It is derived etymologically from the Greek word ‘demos’ and ‘kratos’. “Demos” meaning people while “Kratos” meaning rule, that is “rule by the people”. The concept of democracy, like many other political concept first originated from Ancient Greece whereby citizens were free to meet frequently at assemblies to make laws, free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights. While, Abraham Lincoln, former American President, viewed democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

However, there is no single definition for democracy but what can deduce the various forms of definitions are the following features;

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

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY**

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to perform towards the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. Some of the duties are;

1. Citizens in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
2. They should be willing to pay taxes.
3. They must obey the law
4. A good citizens must desist from uttering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must desist from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
6. She/he must support public education in every way possible through the payment of taxes, local volunteer efforts and any possible and legal means.