

NAME: UGOCHUKWU CHIZITEREM PRECIOUS

MATRIC NUMBER: 19/MHS01/414

COLLEGE: MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT: MEDICINE AND SURGERY

CHAPTER 8

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

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. In addition to the intrinsic democratic value, participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socio-economic change, and a fundamental way to empower citizens.

In ancient times, it was considered a privilege status to be called citizen because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves and some alien residents were not allowed citizenship for racial, political and religious reasons, to be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them. Modern states confer citizenship on practically their whole residents or populations. They provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their populations. They provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their potentialities. In reality, the essence of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens live a good life,

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he was born within the territory of that state, citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in the laws of most countries.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of the community. Social citizenship claims that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

However, there are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical, integrative and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. The personal sacrifices that are made aid some public benefit and are hence ultimately also enjoyed by the person who sacrifices. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. The concept involves the belief that every individual plays an assortment of roles and to immerse themselves into the community, hence causing them to have a greater appreciation of the collective. In addition, this stance holds that one needs an understanding of the personal interests of

members of the wider community as well if they are truly act as members of the public, and hence, the democratic activity that is associated with citizenships aids such an understanding as well.

Citizen's Rights

Individual's rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exist to enable men to live and develop full, In order to let the citizen have a share in the running of the government, a group of rights is very essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens of the state. Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. A right way therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by the law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it become a civil right. If the civil rights of a citizen are invaded by another citizen or the government, he is entitled to seek redress in the court of law. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in its constitution include: the right to life, the right to work m the right to freedom of religion, etc.

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It has been etymology established that 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, like many other political concepts first originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies, citizens were free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights. Abraham Lincoln, former American president, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

COMMON FEATURES OF DEMOCRACY

- i. The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed
- ii. Independent and impartial judiciary
- iii. Existence of rule of law
- iv. Freedom of press
- v. 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, since without taxes to fund government there will be no democracy.
3. A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law. A democracy cannot exist in a lawless society, and without the willingness of citizens 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. He must not interfere with the properties of other persons.
6. He/she must support public education in every way possible.