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CHAPTER 8

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choice of these systems, and the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP: A type of relationship between the people and government. Chapter 111, section 25(a) of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria defines citizenship as:

1. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria: provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria.
2. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and
3. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

CITIZENS’ RIGHTS: Rights may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group.

DEMOCRACY: Derived from the Greek word “*demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning rule, that is ‘rule by the people’’’.

Definitions of democracy have 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

There is a saying in free societies: you get the government you deserve. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active, not passive, because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility, and no one else’s.

Citizens are expected to perform the following duties 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 a democratic government, there would be no democracy.
3. A good 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, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.