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Chapter 8

In every society, sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to vote governmental, political and electoral system in the country. These precepts are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitutions the world over. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. They are both subtle and obvious, small and formidable, and based on numerous factors such as age, race, ethnicity, religion, or another status. Therefore citizens must understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government.

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 ancient Rome it was considered a privilege to be called a citizen because not all the inhabitants were considered as citizens of the Roman Empire. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or naturalization. Citizenship by birth is considered fundamental in the laws of most countries. On the other hand the process by which a citizen exchanges his citizenship for another state to another state is known as naturalization. Chapter 111, section 25: 1(a) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives a detailed definition of who Nigeria considers as a citizen. Section 26(1) to Section 32 also stipulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalize must fulfill before he or she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be divided into Civil, Political, 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 members of such a community and social citizenship ought to have access to those resources that allow them live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society. However, as with so many concepts, citizenship does not have a particular definition it means different things to different people. For example, Branna argue that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity, but that begin willing to contribute to social action as well as to political debate willing to get involved. However there are broader conceptions and perceptions of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover, who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship; ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. Educative citizenship on its part, according to Dagger refers to the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship. Individual’s rights and liberties are the ground work 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 rights is essential. While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties in the state. Democracy citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy; A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote, a citizen should be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes, to fund a democratic government there would be no government, a good citizen should be able to obey the law, a good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies, etc.