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Chapter 8: Citizens Roles In A Democracy

The authority of government likewise derived from the will of the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens, engagement is thus the right and responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizens must understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. Citizens has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government.

Citizens have set of rights and responsibilities including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. Modern states confer citizens on practically their whole residents or populations, they provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their potentialities. The conditions under which naturalization are conferred vary from county to country; For instance 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 .

Citizens can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the right necessary to protect individual liberty, political liberty is associated with participation in democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of political community or as an individual elected by the members of a political community. The personal sacrifices that are made aid some public benefit and are hence ultimately also enjoyed by the person who sacrifices.

In order to let the citizen 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 , right entails some duties and responsibilities on the parts of every citizens. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in its constitution include: the right to life, the right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right of association and right to freedom of speech

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. The Greek democracy was a limited institution in that it excluded labourers, slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. There is no particular definition for democracy and since there is no single definition we can deduce 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

All citizens have duties to the state. 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. A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law, a good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community and a good citizen should be willing to pay taxes.

Citizens play an important role in democracy, democracy assures basic fundamental rights for citizens like to right to vote, right to liberty , right to practice any religion. A positive attitude should be maintained with the development of the state being the priority.