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200L

CHAPTER EIGHT

CITIZEN ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

INTRODUCTION: The authority of government 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 government offices.

The foundation of Democracy: government of the people, By the people and for the people. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Citizen engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development, including the provision of opportunity, resources, services, and security. Citizens must be free to come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government responds to Citizen views.

CITIZENS/CITIZENSHIP

Citizen has a political meaning that implies certain relationship between the people and government. They have set of rights and responsibilities towards the country. To be a Citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights.

Citizenship of a state acquired either by birth or naturalization. Citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in the laws of most countries. Naturalism is the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state.

Section 26 (1) to section 32 also stimulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalize must fulfil before he or she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria.

CITIZENSHIP CAN BE DIVIDED INTO;

Civil citizenship, political citizenship, social citizenship.

CIVIL CITIZENSHIP: This refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty, e.g. human rights such as freedom of speech, justice.

POLITICAL CITIZENSHIP: This is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community (e.g. a voter) or as an individual elected by the members of such a community (e.g. politician).

SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP: This embodies the claim 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

The broader definition and perceptions of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover (2004:18), who argues that there are three dimensions of citizenship which are ethical citizenship, Integrative citizenship, educative citizenship.

CITIZEN'S RIGHTS

All citizens of a country are eligible to fundamental human rights. This rights exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Right maybe defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes civil right. important civil right includes: right to life, right to freedom of religion, right to education, freedom of speech.

DEMOCRACY

The word democracy is derived from Greek word "demos meaning people and kratos meaning rule. Democracy originated from ancient Greece, citizens were free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights. This is what Johnston (2000:23) classified as a direct democracy (a system that makes people exercise power themselves).

Indirect democracy is associated with the free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes.

Abraham Lincoln former president of America, perceived democracy as the government of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Since there is no single definitions of democracy it can be deduced from various ones;

- ❖ The fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed
- ❖ Independence and impartial judiciary
- ❖ Existence of rule of law
- ❖ freedom of press
- ❖ periodic election that is free and fair.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY

All citizens have duties towards the state. Citizens are expected to participate fully in every events in democracy with full enthusiasm to keep the democracy. A clear way of doing this is through citizens ensuring that rulers are accountable, their works must be supervised. Citizens must pay taxes in order to support public projects like schools, water supply system..... All citizens of a states must respect each other rights, they should not interfere with the properties of other persons. Upright citizens must try hard to uphold the peace in the state, they should not stir up racial division which may lead to blood shed or chaos. Citizens should participating in voting so as to elect a good leader of their choice, there is no point in democracy in which citizens do not participate. A democracy cannot exist in a lawless states, there citizens must obey rules and regulations.

