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**REVIEW ON CITIZENS ROLE IN DEMOCRACY**

Citizens in a democratic system control the flow of power in the governmental, political and electoral systems. The citizens have the right to influence the authority of the government, and to take part in their government through participation in elections to elect a representative as embodied in the Universal Declarations of Human Rights and in modern day constitutions. Without the engagement and participation of citizens, democracy cannot stand thus making the participation of the citizens both a right and an obligation of citizens in a democratic state. The engagement of citizens is primarily focused at improving their standards of living by aiming to achieve political, economic, social and cultural development, and the provision of resources, security, services and opportunities for the masses.

In order for citizens to participate actively in democracy, they need to have access to adequate information, preferably information held by the government. Access to information is essential to an informed citizenry thus making transparency and important virtue to democracy. Lack of information to the citizenry becomes a barrier to democracy.

Different countries have different barriers to democracy. They could come in different forms and are based on various factors. For adequate running of democracy, these barriers have to be broken regardless of what they are or else, the citizens would be denied of some of their rights and transparency of the government would be unachievable.

***Conceptual Clarifications***

For the enhancement of the meanings of some words within this text, their clarification is in order.

***CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP***

Citizens have a set of rights and obligations which serve as driving means to achieve socio-cultural and democratic change, and a way to empower the citizens.

Turner (1997;176) defines citizenship as a formal legal identity that a person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to the scarce political, economic and cultural resources of society Republic of Nigeria. Citizenship in a state can primarily be acquired through birth or naturalisation. The Constitution of the Federal defines citizenship in Chapter 111, section 25; 1(a) while section 26(1) to section 32 states the conditions to be fulfilled for a person to be a citizen by naturalisation.

The term “citizenship” has numerous definitions because of the interpretations of different people. Among these is Turner’s definition which is stated above

***CITIZENS’ RIGHT***

The rights of citizens are essential for the smooth running of government. A right could be defined as a privilege conferred by law to a citizen or group. If these rights are being trampled on, the citizen is allowed to seek redress in a court of law.

***DEMOCRACY***

This term is of Greek origin with its roots in the words “demos” (people) and “kratos” (rule). Democracy has many definitions. Among these is the definition given by former President of the United States of America which states that democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Democracy has the following features:

* Guarantee of the fundamental human rights of the citizens.
* Independent and impartial judiciary
* Existence of the rule of law
* Freedom of press
* Free and fair periodic elections.

***DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY***

The duties which the citizens are expected to perform in a democracy include:

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 the duty to obey the law.’
4. A good citizen should refrain from uttering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must refrain from interfering with the rights of other members of society.
6. A good citizen must support public education in every possible way.

Citizens must continue to play their role in government and be critical about the activities of government while still pursuing public interest. Above all optimism should be maintained in the quest for the development of the state.