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**CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY**

***Introduction***

Democracy cannot exist without the engagement of citizens. Engaging in political activities is a right and responsibility of citizens in establishing and sustaining democracy which pursues economic and political development, and also lead to the provision of opportunity, resources and security.

There are various barriers to citizen participation in every country. For full citizenship to be achieved, these barriers must be removed through the following ways;(i) citizens need to have knowledge to make decisions about policy choices and the proper use of authority, and (ii) citizens need to have the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials accountable.

Democracy can be defined as the active involvement and participation of the citizens and the state that brings about development.

***Citizen/Citizenship***

A citizen is an inhabitant of a city or town who is entitled to the privilege of enjoying certain liberties and rights and have a set of responsibilities to follow. Citizenship of a state can be acquired either by birth or by naturalization.

**By birth:** A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state. It is also explained in chapter 111, section 25;1(a) of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, as; **(i)** Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria. **(ii)** every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

**By naturalization:** it is the process by which an individual may change his/her citizenship of a state to another state. The conditions which any person that is trying to naturalize must fulfil before he/she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria is explained in section 26(l) to section 32 of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

According to Marshall, citizenship can be divided into: civil, political and social citizenship. There are also three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical, integrative and educative citizenship.

***Citizens’ Rights***

A right can be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or group. Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. Important civil rights for Nigerian citizens in the constitution includes: right to life, right to education, right to freedom of speech, right to work, etc.,

***Democracy***

Democracy first originated from ancient Greece. The word democracy is derived from the Greek word *“demos”* meaning people and *“kratos”* meaning rule, that is “rule by the people”. According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy can be defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people. With multiple definitions of democracy, the common features among them are: independent and impartial judiciary, existence of rule of law, freedom of press, the fundamental rights of the citizens are guaranteed and periodic free and fair election.

As democratic citizens, we have duties and responsibilities to the state which will lead to the success of the state. The responsibilities include: payment of taxes, obedience to the law, don’t interfere/ violate the right of other members of the community, participation in voting during elections etc.,

***In conclusion:*** Democracy, as the best form of government, allows citizens to exercise many rights as it gives them responsibilities at the same time. Citizens as an important role in democracy should participate with full drive towards the survival of democracy.