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Government chapter 8: Citizens Roles in Democracy

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a Democracy. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens, engagement is thus both a right and responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy.

Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every county. They are both subtle and obvious, small and formidable and based on numerous factors.

Citizen/Citizenship

Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation, to be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to skaves who could not enjoy them.

Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Politicak 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 the members of such community. Social citizenship embodies claims that citizens ought to have access to resources that look them to live a civilised existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

The three dimensions of citizenship by Glover(2004:18)

\* Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential features of citizenship.

\* integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can hi beyond formal political practices and institutions.

\* Educative citizenship (Dagger 1997) refers to the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice citizenship.

Citizens Rights

A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or group of persons. Individuals rights and liberties are the ground work of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Important civil rights accorded to Nigerian citizens in its constitution insvlude: right to life, right to work, right to freedom of association andbeight to freedom of speech, right to freedom of education, right to freedom of religion.

Democracy

Derived from the Greek word demos meaning people and kratos meaning rule, that is, tule by the people. The Greek democracy was limited institution in that it excluded Labourers, skaves and aliens from exercising political rights.

The idea that all citizens, high or low, within the state are entitled to take part in the running of the affairs of their state was first advocated in England after the civil war of the seventeenth century.

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

Since there is no single definition of democracy, what can be defuced from the various definitions of democracy includes

\* The Fundamental tights if the people is guaranteed

\* independent and impartial judiciary

\* existence of rule of law

\*freedom of press

\* periodic election that is free and fair

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in Democracy

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state, Democratic citizens recognise that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. Therefore citizens are expected to perform the following responsibilities in democracy:

\* A good citizen should have the duyy to vote

\*A good citizen must be willing to pay taxes

\*A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community

\*A good citizen must support public education in every possible way

\*A good citizen must have the duty to obey the law.