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 **CITIZENS ROLE IN DEMOCRACY (CHAPTER 8)**

The universal declaration of human right lays the foundation for the famous phase that democratic government is of the people, by the people and for the people. Government processes belong to the people and elections belong to the people. There is no democracy without the commitment of citizens. Citizen engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development, including the provision of opportunity, resources, services and security.

In order to deliver democracy, citizens need to be informed about issues that can improve their lives. They need to learn from those who compete in politics how politicians intend to use that information for the good of the population. Citizens must, therefore, understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They need knowledge to make decisions about policy decisions and the proper use of authority, along with the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public official accountable.

 The term citizen has a political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decision that affect public welfare. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship.

Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty (e.g freedom of speech, justice, the freedom to conclude valid contracts). Political citizenship 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 member of such community (e.g. a politician) and social citizenship 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.

Citizenship is about being willing to contribute to social action as well as to political debate, to be willing to get involved, while involvement in local clubs and societies is seen as valuable. According to Glover, there are 3 dimensions of active citizenship. Ethical citizenship, understand active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship.

Citizen’s rights: in order to let the citizens, have a share in the running of his or her government, a group of rights is very essential. 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, work, freedom of religion, education, freedom of speech and right to association.

Democracy: This is derived from Greek word ‘’demos’’ meaning people and ‘’kratos’’ rule, i.e. ‘’rule by people. According to Abraham Lincoln, he perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. According to him democracy is a government of the people when it is designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state and that is a government by the people when its ideological undercurrents is grounded in the people’s culture, also it is a government which is for the people when the power employed by the resides in the collective mandate of the people.

**Duties and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy**

In democracy, citizens do not only have rights, they also have responsibilities. They recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active, because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility, and no one else’s. citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy.

1. A citizen should have the duty to vote. That’s the whole point if democracy.
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes. without taxes to fund a democratic government, there would be no democracy.
3. A good citizen must desist from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law. Democracy cannot exist in a lawless society, and without the willingness of citizens to obey the law, no government has the ability to police a nation of law breakers and anarchy results.

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly choose the government by voting. Citizens play an important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the co- operation and commitment of citizens. A positive attitude should be maintained with development of the state being the priority.