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Medicine and surgery

**Citizens Roles in a Democracy.**

Citizens have ultimate power in democracy, they have the power to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems and have the right to take part in their government. That is why democracy is popularly defined as a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”, there is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement of citizens in politics is both a right and a responsibility, citizens need to be informed about the government, that is why transparency is essential in democracy.

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Citizenship can be acquired through birth or naturalization. A man becomes a citizen if his parents are citizens of that state or he is born within the territory of the state. Citizenship by naturalization is when an individual voluntarily changes his/her citizenship from one state to another.

Chapter 111, section 25: 1(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria defines citizenship as:

1. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence, either of whose parents or grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria; provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither his parents or grandparents were born in Nigeria.
2. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and
3. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be perceived to be divided into, civil, political and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty (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 political community (voter) or as an individual elected by the members of such community (politician), and social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live in civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society. Citizenship does not have just one definition, it means different things to different people, Brannan argues that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely compromised of passive membership of a political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen.

There are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as well, Glover argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship; ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of politics. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. This concept beliefs that every citizen has their role and that this form of citizenship enables citizens to integrate their various roles and immerse themselves into the community. Educative citizenship according to Dagger, refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship. Active participation aims to expose individuals diverse views and beliefs and deepen their relationship with other citizens. In order to allow citizens have a share in the running of the government, rights are essential. A right at be defined as a privileged or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it is referred to as civil right, some include, right to life, the right to work, right to education, right to freedom of religion. Democracy is derived from two Greek words “demos” which means people and “kratos” which means rule, simple out democracy is the rule of the people. Democracy derived from Ancient Greece, citizens were expected to gather in assemblies and make laws, every citizens was expected to participate in the government. This type of democracy is known as direct democracy. Today democracy or representative democracy also known as indirect democracy, is associated with free discussion of the government. It is in this type of democracy where the citizens elect representatives to make laws for them and represent them in government. In democracy the rights and freedom of citizens count more than the state. The state exists to serve the individuals.

Features of democracy include:

1. The fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of rule of law
4. Freedom of press
5. Periodic election that is free and fair.

While the states provides rights and liberties, citizens have roles to play in the society which are known as responsibilities. Democracy involves investment of time and hardwork and citizens must carry out their responsibilities if they want the protection of their rights. Citizens are expected to perform the following responsibilities to democracy:

1. A citizen has the duty to vote, there is no essence of democracy if we fail to participate.
2. All citizens are expected to pay their taxes. The taxes are used to fund the democratic government.
3. A good citizen must obey the law. Democracy cannot exist in a lawless society. Citizens must assist law enforcement agencies to fight crime by reporting breaches.
4. A good citizen should refrain from offering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive criticism to o government policies.
5. A good citizen must refrain from interfering with rights of other members of the society.
6. Citizens should support public education in every way, through payment of taxes, local volunteer efforts and according to the system the respect it’s entitled.

Democracy is a system of government directly elect the government by voting. It is the best form of democracy as it allows citizens to exercise their rights no gives them responsibilities at the same time. Citizens play a very important role in democracy, without cooperation and commitment of citizens there won’t be democracy. Citizens must be aware of their rights and responsibilities because without awareness of these, there would be tyranny. Citizens should actively participate in democracy to ensure its survival. It is important for citizens rights to be preserved by challenging democracy. The government should be constructively criticized and checks and balances should be put in place to avoid misuse of power