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CHAPTER 8

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

The term citizen politically means a certain type of relationship between the government and the people. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. Modern states confer citizenship on practically their whole residents or populations, they provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their potentialities.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Citizenship determined by place of birth is in the law of most countries and on the other hand, the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his or her citizenship of a state to another is known as naturalization. Although, the conditions which naturalization are conferred vary from country to country. Citizenship can be perceived to be divided into three which are; Civil citizenship: it refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship: it is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a member of a political community. And social citizenship

Which 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 could be referred to as different things according to the aspect but according to its concept generally, it is a privilege status conferred by states on its people either by birth or naturalization.

Citizen's right and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. A right can be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by a law on a person or group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state it becomes a civil right. If the civil rights of a citizen are invaded by another citizen or the government he or she is entitled to seek the court of law. Some civil rights in Nigeria are right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education etc.

DEMOCRACY

Etymologically, democracy is derived from the Greek word "demos" which means people and "kratos" which means rule that is 'rule by the people'. Presently, democracy or representative government which is also known as indirect government is associated with

the free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes. It is a way of determining who shall govern and to what ends they shall rule. Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as government of the people, by the people, for the people. Since there is no particular definition of democracy, some features have been deduced from the various definitions which are;

- The fundamental rights of the citizens 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 A DEMOCRACY

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. A government of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people, for democracy to succeed citizens must be active because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility. In turn, government officials understand that all citizens should be treated equally. Hence, the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy are as follows:

1. A citizen in democracy should have the duty to vote
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes
3. A good citizen must obey the law
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive alternative to government policies
5. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the right of other members of the community
6. A citizen must support public education in every possible way.