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**CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY**

Who is a citizen? A citizen is a person who has a certain type of relationship between that person and the government. 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, registration or naturalization. A person becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of the state. The process by which an individual voluntarily changes his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalization.

Chapter 111, section 25; 1a of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria define citizenship as every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria, every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria and every person born outside Nigeria either whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship does not have just one definition; it means different things to different people. Citizenship is about being willing to contribute to social action as well as to political debate, to be willing to get involved. However, there are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship.

Citizens’ rights- Rights entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege 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 becomes civil right.

What is Democracy? Etymologically, it has been established that the word democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule, that is ‘rule by the people’. Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. There is no single definition of democracy however, what can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy are the following features:

* Existence of rule of law
* Freedom of press
* The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed
* Periodic election that is free and fair etc.

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active not passive, 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:

* A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote
* A citizen should be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes to fund a democratic government, there would be no democracy.
* A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law.
* A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms
* A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
* (s)He must support public education in every way possible, through the payment of taxes, through the payment of taxes, through local volunteer efforts, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect government by voting. Citizens also play a role in democracy, there would be probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens.