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***CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY.***

The authority of the government is derived from the will of the people in their choice of the governmental, political and electoral systems and they have a right to partake in elections especially through genuine elections to determine who'll occupy governmental offices. This is backed up by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by modern constitutions all over the world. Thus, there's no democracy without the engagement of citizens.

 Citizens must have access to information that will affect their lives and government-held information. They must be able to express their views, make government respond to them and hold the government accountable. Transparency and access to information are essential to an informed citizenry.

Barriers which prevent full citizenship (age, gender, race, religion etc) must be removed otherwise, the right to participate in government decisions as well so governmental credibility will be weakened. Citizens need knowledge to make political decisions. So, symbiotic relationship must exist between democracy, the citizens and state's development. It's the citizens participation in governance that brings about development.

'Citizen' means a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. It was a privilege to be a citizen in ancient Rome as non-citizens could not enjoy certain liberties and rights. In essence, the purpose of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens to live a good life.

Citizenship can be acquired by either birth or naturalization. Citizenship by birth is acquired when an someone is born in a particular state or if the parents are citizens of the state. Citizenship by naturalization is a process that involves voluntarily changing ones citizenship from one country to the another. This is stated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Chapter 111, section 25.

Civil citizenship is the right necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship refers to the participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of the community. Social citizenship embodies the the claim that citizens ought to have access to resources that allow them to live a civilised existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

According to Glover, there are 3 types of active citizenship. Ethical citizenship is a collective stride towards public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. Educative citizenship is a process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

Rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men live and develop fully. Civil rights in Nigeria include right to life, right to work, right to freedom of speech, right to freedom of religion etc

Democracy is coined from a Greek word demos—people and kratos, to rule. Although there is no concrete definition of democracy, the former president of America, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This is only realised when it represents the common will of the citizenry within a state (of the people), when its ideological undercurrents are grounded in the people’s culture (by the people) and for the people when the power employed by the state resides and emanates from the people.

Features of democracy include:

1. Guarantee of citizens' fundamental rights.

2. Independent and impartial judiciary.

3. Existence of rule of law.

4. Freedom of press.

5. Free and fair periodic election.

While citizens have rights, they also have responsibilities and duties. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active as the success of government is their responsibility. Responsibility of citizens include voting, paying taxes, obeying the law, refrain from destructive criticism, refrain from interference with the rights of other citzens, supporting public education etc

In conclusion, democracy is a system of government where citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is the best form of government in the modern era as it allows citizens to enjoy and exercise their rights and responsibilities. There is no democracy without the cooperation of citizens. They have the responsibility of challenging the government when it errs. Citizens must not lose sight of the pursuit of public interest and should maintain a positive attitude with the development of the state as the priority.