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Citizens Roles in a Democracy.

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. The term citizen has an inherently 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 decisions that affect public welfare.

In ancient Rome, it was considered a privileged status to he called citizen because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves, serfs and some alien residents were deprived of citizenship for racial, political and religious reasons. Modern states confer citizens on practically their whole residents or populations.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. A man becomes of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he was born within the territory of that state. Naturalisation is the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state. Conditions under which naturalisation are conferred vary from country to country. Chapter 111, section 25: 1(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria fine citizenship as:

* Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of those parents or any of those grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and
* Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or to be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty example 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 example a voter or as an individual elected by the members of such a community example 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.

Citizens' Rights.

Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state. Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group.

Democracy.

Derived etymologically from the Greek word “ demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule that is ' rule by the people’. The concept of democracy , first originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. In these assemblies, citizens were free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights.

Abraham Lincoln, former American president, 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 it is a government by the people when it’s 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 custodians of state business emanates from, and resides in the collective mandate of the people.

Since there is no single definition of democracy however, what can be deduce form the various definitions of democracy are the following features:

* The Fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed.
* Independent and impartial judiciary.
* Freedom of press.

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

A government of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people. Democratic citizens know that they must bear the burden of responsibility for their society if they are to benefit from it’s protection of their rights. 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 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 will be no democracy.
* A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law. A democracy cannot exist in a lawless society, and without the willingness of citizens to obey the law, which is really a social contract the government cannot function properly.
* A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
* A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.

Conclusion.

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is considered as the best form of government in the modern era as it allows citizens to exercise and enjoy many rights and it gives them responsibilities at the same time.

Citizens play an important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens. Democracy assure basic fundamental rights for citizens like the right to vote, right to liberty, right to practice any religion of choice and right to information. Citizens should participate in every important event in democracy to ensure its survival. Citizens should also maintain a positive attitude with development of the state being the priority.