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ASSIGNMENT (CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY)

There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement is thus both a right and a responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizen engagement is not an abstraction; it takes tangible forms and serves particular purposes to improve peoples’ lives. Citizen engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development, including the provision of opportunity, resources, services, and security (Albright, 2012).

For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens’ views, thus holding those in government accountable. To be informed, citizens need accurate and timely information, particularly government-held information. They need to learn from those who compete in politics how politicians intend to employ that information for the good of the population. Citizens, including political competitors, must also be free to impart their views about governmental processes and public affairs; otherwise citizens cannot be truly informed, nor can they freely make choices.

Barrier to citizen participation are multiple in every country. They are both subtle and obvious, small and formidable, and based on numerous factors. For full citizens to be achieved, we must remove those barriers. Whether they are based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age or another status. If not, universal and equal suffrage is essentially denied, and government credibility is undermined. Citizens must therefore, understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They need to acknowledge and make decision about policy choices and the proper use of authority, along with the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials accountable.

CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is the relationship the people and the government. Citizens have a set of right and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In addition to the intrinsic democratic value, participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socia-economic change, and a fundamental way to empower citizens.

Citizens of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state. Citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in laws of most countries. This is what informed Tuner (1997:176), when he opines that citizenship is a formal legal identity that the individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to the scare political, economic and cultural resources of the society.

According to chapter 111, section 25:1(a) of the Constitution of 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: provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parent or grandparents was born in Nigeria. Also, every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parent or grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and every person born outside Nigeria whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

CITIZEN’ RIGHT

The rights and liberties of an individual are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. For citizens to have a share in running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. 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 part of every citizen. Therefore, right is defined as a privilege conferred by law upon a person or a group.

DEMOCRACY

Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from a Greek word ‘’demos meaning people and kratos meaning rule, that is, rule of people’’’ (Emiri, 2003, cited in Ojo, 2015).

According to Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. In the words of Maxey (2010:51), the states and countries where the arrangements, constitutions and practices and the workings of the government are such that the individuals and his rights, freedoms and worth are ensured and guaranteed are usually referred to, as democracies.

FEATURES OF DEMOCRACY

* The fundamental rights of the citizens are guaranteed
* Independence 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

* A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
* A citizen should be willing to pay taxes.
* A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law.
* 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. He must not interfere in his personal dealings and hardworking.
* He or she must support public education in every way possible, through paying of taxes, through local volunteer efforts, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.