



THE FIVE C THEORY

Free Book Excerpt

Chapter Twenty-One

Citizenship Reclaimed

From Private Survival to Public Membership

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**ABOUT THIS
EDITION**

This PDF contains the same approved Chapter Twenty-One excerpt available at FiveCTheory.com/resources/excerpt/. It is not the complete book.

About This Excerpt

The Five C Theory examines how culture, corruption, citizenship, contentment, and complacency interact in Sierra Leonean public life.

This excerpt comes from Chapter Twenty-One, “Citizenship Reclaimed: From Private Survival to Public Membership.”

The chapter begins the book’s final movement from diagnosis to reconstruction.

Some scenes in the book are composite illustrations drawn from recurring social patterns, observations, public experiences, and accounts. Identifying details may be altered or combined to protect privacy and illuminate broader institutional dynamics.

Chapter Twenty-One

Citizenship Reclaimed

From Private Survival to Public Membership

The meeting began with a complaint about water.

For several months, residents had experienced irregular supply. Some households received water for a few hours at unpredictable times. Others depended almost entirely upon vendors. Families with storage tanks managed better. Poorer households purchased smaller amounts at higher cost and spent more time collecting them.

At first, people responded privately. Those who could afford containers bought them. Some paid young men to transport water. Others called relatives in better-served areas or negotiated access to private boreholes.

The community was adapting.

The public failure remained.

A local group eventually invited residents to a meeting. People described hardship, blamed officials, compared governments, and argued about which party had neglected the area more.

Then an older woman interrupted.

“We have said who we blame,” she said. “Now tell me who is responsible.”

She wanted the name of the institution legally responsible for supply, the office managing distribution, the budget available for repair, the location of damaged infrastructure, and the person authorized to explain the failure.

No one knew all the answers.

The group decided to find them.

One person would identify the responsible agency. Another would document the days and hours when water arrived. Households would record what they spent privately. A teacher would help prepare a written request. A religious leader offered meeting space. A young person created a record of every question and response.

Residents did not stop buying water.

Survival could not wait.

But the problem changed.

It was no longer only a private burden managed by isolated households.

It became a public claim organized by citizens.

Citizenship After Diagnosis

Citizenship reclaimed begins in this movement from coping privately to acting publicly.

It does not deny the strength of culture, patronage, fear, or economic pressure. It asks where the cycle can be interrupted.

What can be made public that is currently private?

Which decision can be explained?

Which standard can be applied consistently?

Which citizens can act together so that no individual carries the full risk?

Citizenship reclaimed is not optimism.

It is disciplined interruption.

Citizenship Is Membership With Standing

A citizen is not merely someone who belongs to a country.

A citizen is someone whose membership carries standing.

Standing means the person has the right to ask, object, participate, receive explanation, seek review, and expect equal treatment.

The person should not need wealth, status, political access, or a powerful relative before the state recognizes the claim.

Citizenship says:

I belong here.

Public authority acts partly in my name.

Public resources are managed partly on my behalf.

Public institutions owe me no personal favor, but they owe me lawful and fair treatment.

The official possesses authority.

The citizen possesses equal membership.

Authority governs, but membership gives the governed the right to question how authority is used.

The Unknown Citizen

The strongest test of citizenship is the treatment of the unknown person.

The unknown citizen has no personal connection to the officeholder.

No party official has called.

No relative has made an introduction.

The person arrives with only the application, complaint, need, or right.

If the institution works for that person, citizenship is becoming real.

If it works only after someone important intervenes, the citizen remains a client.

Public systems exist precisely to extend fairness beyond private relationships.

Family can care for relatives.

Friends can assist friends.

Parties can support members.

Religious communities can serve believers.

The state must serve citizens it does not know personally.

Reclaimed citizenship therefore seeks institutions in which anonymity does not become disadvantage.

A person's lack of connection should not be evidence of lesser worth.

Rights Without Begging

Many citizens approach institutions as though public rights were private gifts.

They apologize for asking questions.

They wait without complaint.

They search for someone to speak on their behalf.

They thank officials excessively for performing ordinary duties.

This behavior may reflect experience rather than ignorance. Citizens know that politeness, deference, and personal introduction can improve the chance of receiving attention.

The problem is not courtesy.

The problem is the conversion of entitlement into favor.

A citizen should be able to request a service respectfully without performing inferiority.

The language changes.

Not:

Please help me because I know someone.

But:

Please explain the procedure that applies to everyone.

Not:

I beg you to do something for me.

But:

I submitted the required documents on this date. What stage has the application reached?

Not:

Thank you for giving us this project.

But:

We recognize the project. Please provide the budget, timeline, and completion standard.

This language is not disrespectful.

It restores the public nature of the relationship.

Duties Without Submission

Citizenship also carries duties.

A citizen cannot demand honest institutions while seeking dishonest exceptions.

Cannot condemn favoritism while asking an official to favor a relative.

Cannot complain about public waste while misusing public property.

Cannot demand transparent leadership while spreading claims without evidence.

Cannot insist that others obey rules while treating personal inconvenience as a reason for exemption.

Citizenship therefore requires self-restraint.

The person asks not only what the state owes, but what public membership requires from the self.

This does not create an equal balance of power.

Government possesses greater authority and therefore carries greater responsibility.

But citizens shape institutions through what they request, excuse, reward, and repeat.

A public culture becomes stronger when citizens begin refusing benefits that depend upon unfairness.

This may be costly.

It is also one of the clearest ways private conduct enters public reform.

Continue Reading

Chapter Twenty-One continues by examining:

- the right to ask why
- political support without moral surrender
- citizenship between elections
- local civic participation
- public memory
- collective courage
- professional and religious citizenship
- the duties of institutions
- citizenship as repeated practice

The remaining chapters explore how accountability becomes routine, how private frustration becomes organized public action, and what national refusal is required to prevent inherited failure from becoming destiny.

Continue exploring

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The theory is not a sentence. It is a map.