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**ASSIGNMENT**

Write a two page review of chapter 8, ‘CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY’, in Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics.

**CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY**

Introduction

There is no democracy without the engagement of the people. Engagement is thus both a right and responsibility of citizens for maintaining democracy. 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, for the citizens to be informed, they need accurate and timely government-held information. That is why transparency is necessary for democracy. Barrier that might prevent citizens relationship with the government exist. A symbiotic relationship exists between democracy, the citizens and the state’s development to the effect that citizen’s government, made by the citizens for the citizenry is called democracy.

Conceptual Clarification

*Citizens/Citizenship*

Citizen politically implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibility, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In ancient Rome, few selected people were privileged to be called citizens while slaves and others were not seen as citizens hence didn’t enjoy the rights of citizens. Modern states confer citizens on their whole residents or population. Citizenship can be acquired by birth or naturalization. In the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chapter 111, section 25; 1(a) defines citizenship , section 26 to section 32 stipulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalise must fulfil before he or she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria.

Citizenship can be divided into;

1. Civil citizenship: refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty.
2. Political citizenship: is associated with 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 such a society.
3. Social citizenship: embodies claim the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allows them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

*Citizens’ rights*

It is defined as the privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege id expressed within the framework of a constitution of the state, it is known as a civil right. Important civil rights are; right to life, right to work, right to freedom of religion and so on.

Democracy

It is derived from Greek words ‘‘demos” meaning people and ‘‘kratos’’ meaning rule i.e. rule by the people. This concept originated from the Ancient Greece. Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as the government of the people, for the people and by the people. There is no single definition of democracy; however the following can be deduced from various definitions:

1. The fundamental right of the citizens is guaranteed.
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of the rule of law.
4. Freedom of the press.
5. Periodic election that is free and fair.

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

1. A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes.
3. A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law.
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticism but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
6. He/she must support public education in every way possible, through the payment of taxes through local volunteer efforts, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.

Conclusion

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. Citizens play an important role in democracy. Citizens must be aware of their rights without awareness government would turn into tyranny. Democracy assures fundamental rights for citizens. Citizens must not lose sight of the pursuit of public interest. Citizens should check on how institutions are working. Citizens must ensure that their rights are preserved by challenging government when it errs. Citizens must ensure rulers are accountable.