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**QUESTION**

**DO A TWO PAGE REVIEW CHAPTER 8, “CITIZEN’S ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS.**

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have the right to choose their government, electoral systems and so on with the authority of the government deriving power from the wills of the people. These precepts are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which enable them to capture the foundation of famous formulation that democratic government is of the “people, by the people, and for the people.” They mean just that there is no democracy without the engagement of citizens since government belong to the people, government processes belong to the people; and elections belong to the people. Citizens’ engagement pursues economic, social, cultural, and political development including the provision of opportunity, resources, services, and security.

1. **CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP**

A citizen in the political meaning implies a relationship between the people and the government. They have a set of rights and responsibilities which is also included in the constitution. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Turner{1997:176} 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 scarce political, economic, and cultural resources of the society. On the other hand, the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalization. Chapter 111, section 25 1(a) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria defined what citizenship is. And section 26(1) to section 32 also stipulates the conditions which any person is trying to naturalize must fulfill before he/she can be a legalized citizen of Nigeria. Citizenship can be perceived to be divided into many parts; civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship.

1. **CITIZENS’ RIGHTS**

Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order for a citizen to be able to partake in the running of a government, a group of rights is essential. And these rights are not absolute as they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the country. A right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right and if the civil rights of a citizen are invaded by another citizen or the government; he can seek redress in the court of law. Examples of civil rights in the constitution include: the right to life, the right to work, the right to freedom of religion. Right to education, right to freedom of speech, right of association, writing and publication among others.

1. **DEMOCRACY**

It has been etymologically established that the word “democracy” is derived from the greek word “*demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning rule; ‘rule by the people.’ The concept of democracy originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies to discuss state affairs, take decisions, and exercise their political rights which had the power to make laws. This is what Johnston(2000) classified as a direct democracy; a system that enables people exercise authority themselves. According to Abraham Lincoln, the

former African President who 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 the state.

1. **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBLITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY**

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they also have responsibilities. Democratic citizens know that they must bear the burden of responsibility for their society if they are to benefit from its 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 one else’s. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy: A citizen should have the duty to vote, should be willing to pay taxes since without funds, a democratic government will not be actualized, should have the duty to obey the law, must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies and must refrain from uttering destructive criticism, must refrain from the interference with the rights of other members of the community, a citizen must also support public education in every way possible either through the payment of taxes, through volunteer efforts etc.

**CONCLUSION**

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is also defined as the system of government by the people, of the people and for the people. It is also considered as the best form of government in this modern era. There would probably be no democracy without the cooperation and commitment of citizens who plays an important role in a society. A government may turn into a tyranny if the citizens are not aware of their rights and responsibilities. Democracy assures basic fundamental rights for citizens like the right to vote, right to liberty, right to information, right to practice any religion and so on. And citizens should fulfill their role by having a duty in democracy, ensuring that rules are accountable, checking how institutions like investigating agencies, lawmaking agencies and even public servants that are put in place for the well-being of the democracy, are working. At the same time, personal interest should not overrule them in the pursuit of development for the country.