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*A REVIEW OF CHAPTER 8 “CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY” IN SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA POLITICS.*

Citizens are the recognized members of a society, the aim of the government is to provide for and protect the citizens. The government does not just appear in office in a democratic system, and the leaders are not chosen through inheritance, they are chosen by the citizens of the state. Therefore, sovereignty resides and flows in democracy. The mere definition of democracy which is the government is of the people, by the people and for the people indicates that democracy revolves round the government and although the government might be seen as the highest authority, the citizens have the power to appoint or remove said leaders provided the citizens utilize their rights to make their lives better by choosing the right leader. Since there is no single definition of democracy, what can be obtained from the different definitions of democracy are the following features; 1: rights of the citizens are guaranteed 2: impartial judiciary 3: existence of rule of law 4: freedom of press and 5: free and fair elections.

Also, in democracy, information is vital to ensure the right government is placed in office. The citizens should be informed of their rights and the power they also possess in in a democratic government. They should also be informed of the government agenda and how politicians intend to serve the citizens so that they can ensure that they elect the right government. Therefore, transparency should be a vital element in democracy. In every society there are also barriers to the smooth running of democracy, when people of a specific class, religion, gender or race are denied of participating, the credibility of the government should be questioned because every citizen in a democratic system should be involved in the democratic process.

Citizens of a country in this modern age should be every member of the society who possesses the right to be called citizens according to the different constitutions of the states. In ancient Rome, not everyone was considered a citizen because only the high class members were considered citizens and not the slaves. But today, there are two general ways to become citizens of a state which is by birth or by naturalization. Naturalization is when an individual decides to change his/her citizenship for another, every society has their conditions that they expect everyone who wants to become a citizen has to follow. Citizenship can be divided into civil and political and social citizenship with civil meaning every citizen should have the rights necessary for human liberty, political citizenship meaning citizens have the ability to participate in political activities and social citizenship meaning that citizens should have resources available in the society that allow them to live in a civilized in accordance with the standards prevailing a society.

Kenny, a community development practitioner suggested that there are passive and active citizenship. With passive meaning the responsibility given to the citizens from above i.e. the state while active meaning when people are empowered to participate in the continual process of shaping their communities. Active citizenship can also be divided into ethical, integrative and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship entails the personal sacrifices made by the individual in the political process, integrative on the other hand covers a wider range as it entails the collective effort of the community. Educative citizenship as the name suggests develops the moral, practical and intellectual sense of individual when they practice their citizenship. Active citizenship generally aims at bringing citizens of different backgrounds together and creating a sense of togetherness.

As citizens in a democratic system of government there are certain functions we should carry out if we want the government that would favor us. Therefore for democracy to succeed, citizens must be active. The main function and most important is to ensure we vote during elections because there is no point in democracy if citizens do not come out to vote for the leaders they want or vote out the ones they do not want. Also, citizens should pay taxes, because without taxes there is nothing to fund a democratic government. Citizens must also obey the law and refrain from uttering destructive towards the government or other races or class within the society to prevent bloodshed and chaos. Instead of this citizens can offer constructive criticism. Citizens should also not interfere with the rights of others and must perform every social responsibility required of them. And last but not least, to ensure the practice of democracy does not fade away, citizens should support public education anyway they can to ensure that the younger ones coming up understand the concept of democracy and pick up where we left off.