NAME: Aibangbee Efeosa Anthonia

DEPARTMENT: Pharmacy

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2-PAGED REVIEW ON CHAPTER 8, CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

People in a democracy all have a collective right to choose their government. Democracy according to the UDHR is government of the people by the people and for the people. This means that government belong to the people and the engagement of the people is very essential in democracy. For the success of democracy, the citizens must be informed and feel free to express their views and make vital decisions. Transparency is very vital in democracy. However, there are barriers to the participation of citizens in every country. For full citizenship those barriers have to be removed and citizens must understand and have adequate knowledge bout citizenship, politics and government. Thus, a symbiotic relationship has to be achieved between the government and the people for the active participations of the people in government and to bring about development.

Citizen as a term has a political meaning which implies a relationship between the people and the government. Participation by citizens is very vital in democracy

It is important for citizens to be included and participate in the decisions that affect public welfare because they have the rights and responsibilities that obliges them to take active participation in the affairs of the state and it is an important value that drives towards, democratic and socio-economic change. In Ancient Rome it was a privileged to be given the title of citizen as not everyone was qualified for the position. Citizens enjoy certain rights and liberties that non-citizens aren’t bestowed. Citizenship in a state can either be acquired by birth or by naturalization. Citizenship by birth is taken highly in many countries. This was the principle that influenced Turners definition of a citizen. The voluntary change of citizenship from one country to another is what is referred to as naturalization. The Nigerian constitution defines citizenship as every person born in Nigeria before the date of impendence either of whose parents or grandparents belong or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria. Citizenship is made out to be many things but it has been established that there are three major types of citizenship; civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of power as a member of the political community and social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live in a civilized existence in accordance to standards prevailing in society. Citizenship means many things to different people and as such various definitions have been adopted. Active citizenship entails the participation of citizens in the affairs of the state. It can further be broken down into three types. Ethical citizenship understands the active participation that brings general good for the public. It involves sacrifices for the grater benefit of the state. Integrative citizenship needs an engagement of participation that goes beyond the political practices and institution. It involves bringing together all the skills and talents of the citizens to perform a role that brings forth positive change or progress in reflection of united citizenship. Educative citizenship entails the form of citizenship that develops the three core areas of self-i.e. the moral, practical and intellectual senses. These core areas bring forth interconnection of self among the individuals which unites them and brings about interest in the active participation. Kenny, a community development practitioner argued about how the constrictions of citizenship can be removed if active and passive citizenship are differentiated from each other.

Individual rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state as rights are not absolute because they are limited, they are essential so that citizens can have a share in running his/her government. Rights can be defined as privileges that are conferred by the law upon person or group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution, it is called a civil right. People that invade civil rights will face the court of law for their required punishment. Democracy is derived from the Greek words “Demos” meaning people and “Kratos” meaning ‘rule which refers to the rule by the people. The concept of Democracy involved the general participation of all citizens in making decisions for the state (direct democracy). It excluded non-citizens from taking part in the decision-making process. Today, the world makes use of representative democracy because of the large populations in different countries hence, elected representatives are the ones who work on behalf of the people to make decisions for the state.

Abraham Lincoln, former president of America defines democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Although, democracy has many definitions and has no single definition, it has some main features deduced from the definitions which include that the fundamental human rights are guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of the rule of law, press freedom and periodic, free and fair election.

As citizens have rights, they also have responsibilities to carry out for the benefit and progress of the state. In a free society, you get the government you deserve and for that to take place we have to be active citizens and not passive ones. Some of these duties are for citizens to vote so that they won’t be unhappy with their leader. Citizens should also be able to pay taxes for without taxes to fund the governmental activities, there won’t be a democracy. Citizens must obey the law at all times. Deviants that break the law are appointed their appropriate punishments. Citizens must refrain from offering destructive criticisms and be prepared to offer better alternatives to government policies. The citizens should not complain of the problems instead they should work towards finding a solution to these problems. Citizens should refrain from interfering with other citizens’ rights. Keep to your property and others will do the same and so there won’t be any problematic situations. And finally, they should also support the public education in every way possible to provide education for the young minds as they are the leaders of tomorrow.

It’s a plus for citizens born in a democratic country and that is the more reason they are to save the democracy at all cost. There will be no democracy without cooperation and their commitment so citizens should play their individual roles, work together and participate in political activities for the betterment of their country.