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1. Do a two paged review of Chapter 8, Citizens Roles in a Democracy, In Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics.

Citizens Roles in a Democracy.

Power is vested in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have the rights to choose their political, electoral and governmental systems. The power of the government generates from the will of the people in their choices of the systems and the people have the right to participate in government, through free and fair elections to determine who will lawfully occupy the seats of government.

Democracy is essentially the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This implies that the government is owned by the people, the processes of government and electoral processes also belong to the people. Therefore, there is no democracy without the people.

Democracy can only take effect when the citizens are informed about the issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to work collectively to express their views and work to see that the government responds to the citizens views. Hence, since the citizens or masses are directly or indirectly involved in the government one way or the other, they need to understand the concepts of citizenship, politics and government. The citizens need knowledge to make choices and decisions about policy choices and the use of power and authority, the skill to speak out and voice their concerns, act together and hold the people in power accountable. A relationship exists between democracy, the people and the nations development to affect the government of the citizens, made by the citizens, for the citizens.

The term citizen has a number of meanings. In ancient Rome, to be a citizen simply means to enjoy rights and privileges as opposed to the slaves, and alien inhabitants in the nation. Some modern nations grant citizenship to virtually all their inhabitants which enables them to exercise certain rights and privileges. According to Marshall, 1992, citizenship can be seen as divided into civil, political and social citizenship. Civil citizenship implies to the rights needed to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship is referred to as participation in the democratic use of political power, as either a member or an elected representative. Social citizenship involves the deceleration that citizens have access to the resources that allow them to live a civilized life in line with the standards of the society.

The concept of citizenship implies that citizenship is not singly composed of a passive member of a political body but being an active member is also important of a citizen. Citizenship is about the willingness of a citizen to contribute to the political community. It is the willingness to get involved. (Brannan et. al.2006). According to Glover. 2004, there are 3 dimensions of active citizenship: Ethical, Integrative and Educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands that active participation in a collective effort towards the public good is an essential characteristic of citizenship. Integrative citizenship requires a broad area of participation that goes beyond formal political procedures and practices. Educative citizenship, according to Dagger (1997) is the process that grows a moral, intellectual and practical sense of self in individuals when they exercise their citizenship. Whichever way one decides to view the concept of citizenship, citizenship is a privilege conferred by nations or countries on its people either by birth or naturalization.

Citizens enjoy some set of privileges and entitlements referred to as Citizen Rights. In order for a citizen to have a share in running the government either directly or indirectly, a set of rights is necessary. A right is a set of privileges or prerogatives conferred upon a person or group of people by law. When a right is expressed within a constitution it becomes a civil right and when such a right is invaded, a person is entitled to seek redress in a court of law.

Democracy is derived from the Greek word “Demos” meaning people and “Kratos” meaning rule. According to Abraham Lincoln democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. In a democracy, the rights and freedoms of the citizens and value of individuals count more than that of the state. The state is there to serve individuals and provide conditions which make life enjoyable.

Citizens have a duty to the state. As democratic citizens they have rights and responsibilities to the state. The government of the people demands constant support and encouragement from the people. The citizens in a democracy are required to exercise their political rights and vote. The citizens are also expected to be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes to fund the democratic government, there will be no democracy. Citizens are expected to obey the laws of the nation, refrain from infringing upon the rights of fellow citizens and support public education in every way. Asides the rights, the citizens are also expected to be critical of what the government does but at the same time the citizens need not loose sight of the public interest. A positive attitude to the government should be maintained with the growth of the state being the prime concern.