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**Assignment: Do a two review of Chapter 8, Citizens Role in a Democracy, in Salient issues in Government and Nigeria's Politics.**

## **CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY.**

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement is thus both a right and a responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizen engagement is not an abstraction, it takes tangible forms and serves particular purposes to improve people's lives. It pursues economic, social, cultural and political development. Access to information is essential to an informed citizenry, that is why transparency is a necessity for democracy. Barriers to citizens participation are multiple in every country and for full citizenship to be achieved, we must remove these barriers whether they are based on gender, race, ethnicity religion, age or another status. A symbiotic relationship exists between democracy, the citizens and state's development to the effect that citizen's government, made by the citizens for the citizenry is called democracy.

### **Citizen/Citizenship**

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In ancient Rome, to be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them. Modern state confers citizens on practically their whole residents or populations. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state while the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of state to another state is known as naturalization. The conditions under which naturalization are conferred vary from country to country. *Chapter 111, section 25: 1 a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also defines citizenship. Section 26 (1) to section 32 also stipulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalize must fulfil before he or she can be registered as a citizen of Nigeria.*

Citizenship can be made up of civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship are the rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political power, a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of such a community. Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standard prevailing in society. As with so many other concepts, citizenship does not have just one definition, it means different things to different people.

### **Citizens' Rights.**

Individual's rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Although rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state, they are very essential. 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 become a civil right, these rights include; right to freedom, right to association, right to religion, etc. If the civil right of a citizen is invaded by another citizen or government, he is entitled to seek redress in the court of law.

### **Democracy.**

Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from the Greek word “*demos*” meaning people and “*kratos*” meaning rule, that is ‘rule by the people’. Like many other concepts, the concept of democracy first originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. Direct democracy is a system that enables people exercise authority themselves. The Greek democracy was a limited institution in that it excluded labourers, slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. In England after the great civil war of the seventeenth centuries, the idea that all citizens, high or low, within the state was first advocated. The American colonies, having successfully revolted against England, developed democratic ideas and institutions as a way of life, which spread from country to country in the western world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. According to Maxey, in a democracy, the rights, freedoms and the value of individuals count more than those of the state.

### **Features of democracy;**

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

### **Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy;**

- a) A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
- b) A citizen should be willing to pay taxes.
- c) A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law.
- d) A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
- e) A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
- f) She/he must support public education in every way possible, through the payment of taxes, through local volunteer efforts, through according to this system the respect to which it should be entitled.

### **In conclusion;**

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is considered as the best form of government in the modern era as it allows citizens to exercise and enjoy many rights and it gives them responsibilities at the same time. Citizens play an important role in democracy and they probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens. A government may turn into a tyranny without the awareness of citizens’ rights and responsibilities among themselves. Citizens should participate in every event in democracy with full enthusiasm to ensure the survival of democracy. Citizens should also check how institutions like investigating agencies, lawmaking agencies and even civil servants, that are put in place for the well-being of the democracy, are working. At the same time, while being critical, citizens must also not lose sight of pursuit of public interest. A positive attitude should be maintained with development of the state being the priority.