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WRITE A TWO-PAGE REVIEW ON CITIZEN’S ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY (CHAPTER 8)

**Introduction**

In this chapter the democratic right and privileges of citizens in a democratic environment were highlighted as well as the objectives they are obliged to fulfill as bonafide citizens of a democratic environment.

The laws that authorize the effective engagement of citizens in a democratic system of government are embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in various modern constitutions all around world. It is from thus that the famous definition of a democratic government was etched from ‘a government of the people, by the people and for the people.’ It is a government that is fully accountable to the citizens and thus citizens should be well aware of their rights to be able to exercise their privileges.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

Citizen/Citizenship: In modern states, citizens are generally their whole residents or population; they provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their personalities. However, in ancient Rome being a citizen was given as a status only to select people and not everyone who lived there.

Citizenship as defined by Turner is ‘a formal legal identity that the individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to the scare political, economic and cultural resources of society.’ Citizenship of a country can be acquired by birth or naturalization; however, the laws for naturalization may very depending on the country. Chapter 111, Section 25:1(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria outlines citizen by birth as considered by the Nigerian government and in Section 26(1) to Section 32 it also stipulates the conditions one must fulfill to undergo the naturalization process of becoming a registered Nigerian citizen. Citizenship from the textbook can be divided into three

1. Civil: refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty, e.g., freedom of speech.
2. Political: associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, when voting or being the one being voted for (politician).
3. Social: embodies the claim that citizens have to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the prevailing standards in society.

Citizen’s Rights

A right may be defined as privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. It is very essential in a democratic state to let the citizens have a share in the running of his/her government. A civil right is a right expressed within the framework of that country’s constitution and upon infringement, one can seek redress in the court.

Democracy

A word coined from the Greek words, ‘demos’ meaning people and ‘kratos’ meaning to rule. It was from ancient Greece that this political concept originated from. However, their democracy was a limited institution with only select people having political rights. The American colonies, having successfully revolted against England in the Civil War in the 17th century developed democratic ideas as a way of life and advocated it to England after the civil war.

Democratic(representative/indirect) government is associated with the free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by voting. This system of government has many features of which are a few: freedom of press, existence of rule of law, periodic free and fair election, fundamental human rights, independence of the judiciary, etc.

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

For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active and not passive, because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility and no one else’s.

1. Citizens are to perform the duty to vote: Citizens are to be very active in this aspect as it is the system by which they vote in the people they’d like to govern them.
2. Citizens are to be faithfully and consistently paying their taxes as this is a major source of funds in a democratic system of government.
3. Citizens are not to speak falsely or disrespectfully (slander) about the government. If there are issues, they are not satisfied with they can go through legal means to put forth their dissatisfaction.
4. Citizens must of course be law abiding: This essential to have a peaceful operation of democracy in any state.
5. Citizens must refrain from abusing or infringing on the rights of other citizens.