**NAME**: SAIKI TOLUWALASHE DEBORAH

**COLLEGE**: LAW

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**CHAPTER**: CHAPTER 8, Citizens Role in a Democracy

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the constitutions in the modern world both confer sovereignty on the people in a democratic system of Government. They have the right to choose governmental representatives and the government gets its authority from the people that is why democracy is known as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Engagement of citizens in democracy is what makes it legitimate, improves the lives of people and pursues economic, social, cultural, and political development. So, this said engagement is both a right and responsibility of the citizens.

Citizens need to enjoy certain liberties in order for democracy to deliver. They need accurate and timely information in order for them to make informed decisions that will improve lives. They should be free to associate with each other and share their views. Access to information is important for an informed citizenry. Every country has things that hamper citizen participation it can be obvious or subtle. It can be race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and status. Democracy can be defined as the citizen’s government made by the citizens of the citizenry. It involves the active participation of the citizens which will lead to development.

The political meaning of a citizen denotes a relationship between the people and the government. All citizen enjoy certain inalienable rights and responsibilities. In modern states practically all residents are citizens as opposed to ancient Rome where the title was only or a select few. There was political, racial, and religious reasons for depriving citizens of their rights. This was wrong because the essence of a state was to enable citizens leave a good life.

Citizenship can be acquired through different ways, by birth or by naturalization. It is a legal identity that a person inherits through the collection of legal rights and obligations controlling access to scarce a political, economic and social resources. Citizenship through birth is very important in a lot of counties. A person becomes a citizen of a state if he/she is born there or if the person’s parent is a citizen of the state. Naturalization is a legal process where a person can change their citizenship to another state. The conditions are different for different counties to attain citizenship, it is found in section 26(1) to section 32. Citizenship is divided into 3 civil citizenship which entails the rights needed to protect individual liberty, Political citizenship has to do with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, and lastly social citizenship which is the rights that citizens have to social amenities that will enable them live a civilized life according to the standards currently in place in the society.

Brannan gives another perspective to the definition of citizenship. He sees it as the willingness to get involved in social actions and political debates. The involvement should show public-mindedness and should have a larger purpose. Glover believes there are 3 dimensions of active citizenship. Ethical citizenship it strives towards the public good and the sacrifices made are also to benefit them in the long run. Integrative citizenship, it believes that every individual has different roles to play and they bring their various roles together to perform a larger one. Educative citizenship, develops moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals. Active participation deepens ones sense of interconnectedness, overcome individualism and self-interest and lastly develops important capacities.

Every citizen has a right even though they are limited by the rights of others. That being said rights are the privileges or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Every privilege in the constitution is known as a civil rights and if infringed upon they have the right to a redress in court. The civil rights include right to life, right to freedom, right to education and so on.

Democracy comes from two Greek words ‘DEMOS’ and “KRATOS” meaning people and rule respectively. The rule by the people. Democracy originated from Ancient Greece where the people sat together and presided over matters of the state, every citizen was to participate in matters of the state. Democracy in Greece was however limited because the low class was excluded from the process. True democracy first advocated in England after the civil war where everyone was involved in the democratic process by the Levelers. The American society then took it up and developed it and it started growing from community to community in the 19th and 20th century. Democracy is also known as indirect government and is practiced all over the world today.

Abraham Lincoln describes it as the government of the people by the people and for the people. It of the people when it represents the common will of the people. By the people its ideologies is grounded in the people’s culture and for the people when the power used by the custodian of state business emanates from and resided in the collective mandate of the people. Maxey states the rights, freedoms and values of individuals count more than those of the state. Any state and county where the practices and workings are such that individuals and their rights are ensures are referred to as democracies. Democracy always has rule of law, freedom of press, periodic free and fair election, independent judiciary and fundamental human rights of citizens.

Citizens in a democracy have duties and responsibilities to carry out. They have both rights and responsibilities and are to be active citizens these duties include. Voting during elections, it is very important so as to elect people of their choice. Citizens should pay their tax for the development of the country. Citizens have the duty to obey the law. Every citizen must support public education in every way possible. A good citizen should not infringe on the rights of another citizen.

In conclusion, seeing the immense role that citizens play in democracy they should be adequately informs about their roles in democracy and participate property to ensure the smooth running of democracy.