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Do a two page review of chapter 8, citizen’s role in a democracy, in salient issues in government and Nigeria’s politics

In a democracy, authority lies within and flows from the people. As a matter of self-determination, they have the collective right to choose their legislative, political and electoral structures. Similarly, political power comes from the will of the people to select these structures, and people have the right to engage in their government. In the universal declaration of human rights and in current constitutions around the world, these precepts are expressed. They form the basis for the popular formulation that "of the people, by the people and for the people" is democratic government. In essence, they say only that: governments belong to the people, people belong to the governmental structures, and the people belong to the elections. Without the participation of people, there is no democracy. Accordingly, participation is both the right and the duty of people to build, grow and maintain democracy. Citizen participation is not an abstraction; it takes concrete forms and serves practical objectives to enhance the lives of individuals. In order to deliver democracy, citizens need to be informed about issues that can enhance their lives. They need to be free to come together to express their opinions and preferences and work to see that government responds to the views of citizens, thereby holding those responsible for government. Citizens need accurate and timely information, particularly government-held information, to be informed. They need to understand how politicians want to use their knowledge for the good of the population from those who compete in politics. For an educated citizenry, access to knowledge is important. Therefore, for democracy, accountability is a must. People must be able to express their viewpoints on governmental processes and public policy, or it is not possible to truly educate citizens. In every country, barriers to citizen participation are multiple. They are both small and formidable, subtle and obvious, and based on numerous variables. We need to overcome these obstacles, whether they be based on sex, colour, nationality, age or other status, in order for full citizenship to be achieved. If not, universal and fair suffrage is ultimately refused, and public credibility is weakened. Therefore, people need to grasp ideas about citizenship, politics and democracy. The word citizen has an explicitly political sense that suggests a certain kind of relationship between the government and the people. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to take part in public welfare decisions. In ancient Rome, it was considered a privileged status to be called a citizen because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves, serfs and some alien residents were deprived of citizenship for racial, political and religious reasons. State citizenship can be gained either by birth or naturalization. If his parents are citizens of that state, or if he is born within the territory of that state, a man becomes a citizen of a specific state. On the other hand, the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalisation. Citizenship can be perceives to be made up of or divided into 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 political power, either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of such a community and 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 standards prevailing in the society. Citizenship does not have only one definition, it means different things to different people. Brannan et al argues that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen. There are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenship as shown as Glover, who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrative citizenship involves the belief that every individual plays an assortment of roles and that this form of citizenship enables the individual to integrate their various roles, and to immerse themselves into the community. Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship. Kenny, a community development practitioner, argues that contemporary constructions of citizenship can be understood by differentiating passive from active citizenship. Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order to let the citizen have a share in the running of his or her government, a group of rights is essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or group. Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from the Greek word ‘demos’ meaning people and ‘kratos’ meaning rule that is the rule of the people. The concept of democracy, like many other political concepts first originated from ancient Greece were in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. Every citizen was expected to participate in the running of the government. This is what Johnston classified as direct democracy, a system which enables people exercise authority themselves. Democracy or representative government which is also known as indirect government is associated with free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes. Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Since there is no single definition of democracy we can deduce the following features: the fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of rule of law, freedom of press, periodic election that is free and fair. While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens know that they must bear the burden of responsibility for their society if they are to benefit from its protection of their rights. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy: a citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote, a citizen should be willing to pay taxes, a good citizen must have a duty to obey the law, a good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms to governmental policies, a good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community, a good citizen must support public education.