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 **A REVIEW ON CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCARCY**

In a democratic system of government, supreme power of authority resides and flows from the people. These principles are embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitutions over the world. They capture the foundation for the famous formulation that democratic government is “of the people, by the people and for the people.” There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement in this sense means the right and responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizen engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development, including the provision of opportunity,
resources, services and security.

In other for democracy to deliver, citizens must be very informed; that is why transparency is very essential and a necessity for democracy. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. In other to remove these barriers citizens must, therefore, understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. A symbiotic relationship exist between democracy, the citizens and state’s development to the effect that citizen’s government, made by citizens for the citizenry is called democracy and it is the involvement or active participations of the people in governance that brings about development.

Citizens refer to a certain type of relationship that exists between people and government. Citizens have set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare; participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socio-economic change, and a fundamental way to empower citizens. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights.

The essence of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens to lead the good life. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. The term naturalization is a process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state. The conditions under which naturalization are conferred vary from country to country. Citizenship can be said to be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty; political citizenship is associated with the 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 the society.

**Citizen/Citizenship**

Citizenship has many definitions as it means different things to different people. For example, Brannan argues that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely compromised of passive membership of a political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen. Glover also argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Active participation develops important capacities by exposing citizens to the connection between their private interests and the public interest. Also, Kenny, a communist development practitioner, argues that contemporary constructions of citizenship can be understood by differentiating passive from active citizenship. He says that” to ensure full citizenship, people must be empowered to participate in continual process of shaping their society, their communities, and their identities”. Whichever way one looks at the concept, citizenship is a privilege of status conferred by states on its people either by birth or by naturalization i.e. voluntary change of citizenship from a state to another.

**Citizens’ Rights**

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 constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right. If the civil rights of a citizen are invaded by another citizen or the 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’. The concept of democracy, like many other political concepts 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.

Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Since there is no single definition of democracy, some features can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy, they are as follows:

1. The fundamental rights of the citizens is 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**

Democratic citizens recognize that they do not only have rights but also responsibilities, they recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility and no one else’s.

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is 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.