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CITIZENS ROLES IN DEMOCRACY

There is no democracy without the engagement of the citizens. In democracy, sovereignty resides in the people and they get to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. However, a well-known definition that justifies the role of people in democracy is a definition by Abraham Lincoln and he defined it as government of the people, by the people and of the people. The concept of democracy first originated from Greece because it was expected that citizens of Greece (not all) had a say in their governance. The word democracy is derived from two words “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule by the people. Features of democracy are freedom of press, independent and impartial judiciary, periodic election that is free and fair, the rights of citizens should be guaranteed and existence of rule of law. For democracy to deliver, citizens must be informed about the issues that can improve their lives, and they must express their views and preferences and work to see that government respond to their views. Restrictions on citizen are multiple in every country, which has denied universal suffrage.

Citizen or citizenship is a type of relationship between the people and government. They have set of rights and responsibilities. However, participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socio-economic change and a fundamental way to empower citizens. In Ancient Rome, to be called a citizen was a privilege because it wasn't accorded to all. Citizenship can be acquired by birth, or by naturalization. Citizenship by birth means when you are given birth within the territory, while citizenship by naturalization is acquired by attaining certain criteria provided by the state. Citizenship can be divided into civil citizenship, social citizenship and political citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty; political citizenship is participation in the democratic exercise of political power; and social citizenship is

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 society. Citizenship according to Glover is divided into three dimensions and they are ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educated citizenship. Ethical citizenship is all about public which is an essential feature of citizenship; integrative citizenship goes beyond political practice and institution, and; educative citizenship is a process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

Individuals of a state are entitled to certain rights and liberties which are very essential in a democratic society. A right can therefore be defined as the privilege conferred by law upon a person or a group of people. Rights when included in the framework of a constitution is regarded as civil rights and any abuse of these rights by other individual or government, the victim can seek redress in court. Some civil rights accorded to a Nigerian by its constitution includes: freedom of life. Freedom of liberty freedom of speech and so on. Well, as the state grants citizens right and liberties, citizens also have duties and responsibilities to the state. Duties of a citizen includes: the duty to vote, duty to pay taxes, duty to obey the law, a duty to refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but offer constructive alternatives instead, and so on.

In conclusion, democracy is the best form of government in the modern era, as it better than other forms government. In democracy, citizen play an important role in democracy because without their cooperation, the practice of democracy will be a failure. So, for the practice of democracy to flourish rights of citizens alongside other features of democracy must be established and citizens must actively participate by performing their duties.