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Assignment

Do a two page review of chapter 8, Citizens Role in a Democracy, In S

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choice of these systems, and the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices.

For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens’ views, thus holding those in government accountable. To be informed citizens need accurate and timely information, particularly government-held information. They need to learn from those who compete in politics how politicians intend to employ that information for the good of the population.

It is important to clarify some concepts in order to further understand them such as:

* Citizens/Citizenship: The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the rights to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In addition to the intrinsic democratic value, participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socio-economic change, and a fundamental way to empower citizens. In ancient Rome it was considered a privileged statue to be called 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.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired by either by birth of by naturalization. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of the state. The process by which an individual may voluntarily change his or her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalization and the conditions vary from country to country. Citizenship does not just have one definition as it means different things to different people.

* Citizen’s Rights: Individual 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 very essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state. Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group, Important civil rights accorded to Nigerian citizens in its constitution include the right to life, the right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right of association and right to freedom of speech, writing and publication among others.
* Democracy: It has been long since established that the word democracy was coined from the Greek words ‘’demos’’ meaning people and ‘’kratos’’ meaning rule, that is ‘rule by the people’. The concepts of democracy like many other concepts that originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states; citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. In these assemblies, citizens were free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights.Every citizen was expected to participate in the running of government.

Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. According to him, democracy is a government of the people when it is designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state and that it is a government by the people when its ideological undercurrents is grounded in the people’s culture, also it is a government which is for the people when the people employed by the custodians of state business emanates from and resides in the collective mandate of the people.

The following can be used to sum up all that a democracy entails since there is no single definition for it:

* The fundamental rights of the citizens must be guaranteed
* Independent and impartial judiciary
* Existence of rule of law
* Freedom of the press
* Periodic election that is free and fair

Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. They recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. A government of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy:

* A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote as there is no point in a democracy in which the citizens do not participate in.
* A good 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 but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies
* A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community as well as supporting public education through paying of taxes.