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Message of hope for the restoration of an African identity in Mai Charamba's gospel music – A practical criticism

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Abstract

Mai (Mrs) Charamba and her musical band the Fishers of Men released some two powerful songs that are pregnant with issues on Africa as a continent. The two songs are: 'Africa restore identity' and 'Africa paBetesda'. In those two songs, Mai Charamba has a message of hope for the restoration of a genuinely African identity. She perceives that particular identity as being overshadowed by some crude racist claims that are made by non-African people on African people and the continent itself. Since the message of hope which Mai Charamba elucidates in those songs is directed towards Africa, which is both the birthroot and the birthright of the African people, that message needs to be unearthed and interrogated for the benefit of Africans. That is done from an understanding that, an artist, who is committed to his/her people, needs to be a visionary to them. That role demands that every artist has to study the history and culture of his/her intended audience and then interpret the issues he/she raises from an understanding of the history and culture.

Introduction

This paper carries out a practical appreciation of Mai Charamba's message of hope for the restoration of a genuinely African identity in two of her hit songs 'Africa restore identity' and 'Africa paBetesda'. The paper starts by presenting the two songs. It will then unearth the message of hope in the two songs before it critically appreciates the message and how Mai Charamba presents it in her music. The argument of the paper pivots on the understanding that, Africa is suffering under neocolonialism (Nkurumah as cited by Slemmon 2005, wa Thiong'o 1986 and Chinweizu, 1997). It further argues that, Africa has the potential to triumphantly struggle for total independence from neocolonial bondage (Tembo, 2012). That being the argument,