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Centring silences: the elusive photographic archive of Mabel Cetu

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ABSTRACT

Mabel Cetu had a dynamic life, with a career as a photojournalist, journalist, nurse and councillor, however details surrounding her history – including her photojournalistic practice during the middle of the twentieth century – are widely absent from historical records in South Africa. This research, presented as both a written paper and creative component, with a reader titled *Centring Silences: The Elusive Photographic Archive of Mabel Cetu*, grapples with the nebulous depiction of Cetu's narrative in mainstream history and within the archives of two of the many publications she worked for: *Drum Magazine* and *Golden City Post*. In examining institutional archives, this report questions how, in the face of archival absences relating to Cetu, can her practice be centred. By engaging "official" and "unofficial" archives and experimental processes, this research aims to provoke the silences encasing Cetu's memory, and invokes nuanced, alternative narratives to explore the fragments of Cetu's history.

KEYWORDS

Archives, memory, gender, photojournalism, histories of photography, media