

## Workers' Day: This industry is not what it used to be, says clothing worker

Fadwah Rinquest has been working as a seamstress at one of Cape Town's oldest clothing factories - House of Monatic - for ten years.

By [Barbara Maregele](#) <sup>2</sup> May 2019



Seamstress Fadwah Rinquest has been working for over ten years at House of Monatic. She is also a union shop steward.  
Photo: Ashraf Hendricks

Rinquest, 33, leaves her home in Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain at about 6am to catch a taxi to work in Salt River before 8am everyday.

"I've been a qualified machinist at House of Monatic for ten years. I'm an all-rounder, but I usually work on stitching the cuffs on shirts. There are more than 40 other people working on my line," she said.

Her day begins with a coffee with colleagues at a nearby shop off Victoria Road before work starts at 7:45am. "Two bells go off every morning, telling us when to start working. The first one signals when we should come inside and three minutes later, the next one rings to say we should be at our work stations," s said.

"I prefer taking a taxi because the N2 is so crazy. If I take a bus then I have to leave home after 5am." (Taxis are much faster, and don't usually take the N2.)

To keep busy throughout the day, Rinquest has become a versatile worker, often stepping in to help with ironing and operating other machines.



FASHION & HOMEWARE

Reviving Cape Town's clothing and textiles industry

19 Mar 2019

“I’ve been injured a few times with the needle ending up this finger,” she said pointing to her right index finger. “You have to concentrate on the garment. You can’t look around and have conversations. But now I can do this with my eyes closed,” she joked.

House of Monatic, which makes and sells items ranging from trousers, jackets and shirts, has been around for over 100 years, with more than 400 employees. In recent years, Rinquet said, the company has been downsizing staff and operations in a bid to save costs.

“The company is busy renovating to move everyone from the factory next door into this building. There has been a rumour over the years that we would be closing down but we are still here today,” she said.

Rinquet is also a shop steward for the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union. She said that one of the best parts of her job was helping her colleagues and “defending workers’ rights”.

“I’m one of the lucky ones to be working for a company that is up to date with everything. They follow all of the rules and procedures. Most of the people tell me about all of the issues they are having at their companies which is sad,” she said.



#### DESIGN & MANUFACTURING

### South Africa's failure to create manufacturing jobs

Jeremy Seekings and Nicolai Natrass 25 Feb 2019

The union’s Simon Eppel said the clothing industry was doing far better compared to the mid-2000s when factories had job losses of about 15,000 a year. “The level of job losses dropped dramatically to around 3,000 and 4,000 job losses a year. For the first time in over a decade, we experienced job growth between 2014 and 2015. It appears the industry is returning to more stability again,” he said.

While Rinquet enjoys working for the company, her ambition is to have her own business making clothes and other items. A few years ago, she saved up enough to buy her own sewing machine. So between caring for her husband and their 13-year-old son, Rinquet said she sews clothes and pillows at the weekend to boost her wages.

“Our salary doesn’t always cover all of our expenses but at least it’s something. The old people always say ‘we work from the hand to the mouth’ and that’s what it is. My husband and I both work, but it’s not enough because water, electricity and all your bills go up,” she said.



#### EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

### #SourceAfrica2018: Lessons from K-Way's lean turnaround

Lauren Hartzenberg 26 Jun 2018

Asked whether she would encourage others to join her industry, she said, “There are so many youngsters still looking for work who ask me if we have places available here. To be honest, the industry is not what it used to be with all the cheaper Chinese goods coming into the country. But the unions are fighting for our jobs.”

Rinquet urged all workers and their families to attend COSATU’s all-day event at the Athlone Stadium on

Workers' Day. "It's very important for all workers to commemorate this day and be educated on their rights. This event will have different speakers and activities for all ages," she said.

*Read the original article on [GroundUp](#).*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>