

‘Then, I started entering half-marathons. Gradually, running became an important part of how I coped.

‘Yet, I am not strictly a competitive runner. In 2008, I tried to train for a full marathon in a very structured and serious way, but I found the training routine too onerous when added to the demands of parenting and starting my practice at the Bar. I found I wasn’t any longer enjoying running.

‘So, I switched back to half-marathons and the enjoyment returned. It fits more comfortably into my life. I tend to run more often in the spring and summer months, and I do more races then. In winter, I slow down and run only on weekends.

‘Between the months of September and April, I run pretty much five times a week and aim to take part in one half-marathon per month. My running season culminates in the Two Oceans Half Marathon, which takes place in Cape Town every Easter, before tapering off into the winter slow-down.

‘To date, I’ve completed 15 races, including eight Two Oceans.’ Many colleagues wonder how Ncumisa manages this regime.

‘For me the trick is to run first thing in the morning. That is why it works better for me in the summer months when there is morning light. I have tried to run in the afternoons – I even joined a running club – but I tend to find it is easier in the afternoons to opt for staying at work later than to run, or to choose to do homework with the kids or to bring my own work home.

‘There’s something magical about morning running: the solitude; the crisp freshness of the air; the fact that the world is still asleep while you manage – repeatedly and rapidly – to put one foot in front of the other.

‘It makes it feel pretty special. It makes the day ahead seem full of possibilities, rather than burdens.

‘It often helps me solve problems in my cases – running alone in the morning.’

Ncumisa is philosophical about the challenges she faces as a young woman at the Bar: ‘I believe that organised professional associations, like the Bar, are a microcosm of their immediate environment. The Bar reflects how Cape Town is organised.

‘Negative perceptions are a challenge.

However, there are also opportunities that flow from the same difficulty: being a black female practitioner.’

By all accounts, Ncumisa Mayosi is expert at turning difficulties into opportunities – in court and on the road.



Since November 2009, Jean Meiring has been a member of Group 621 at the Johannesburg Bar. Previously, he was an academic in the United Kingdom, and he has moonlighted as a freelance journalist. 

The story of Dennis: from messenger to group leader

DUMISA NTSEBEZA SC WAS APPOINTED AS GROUP LEADER OF THE DUMA NOKWE GROUP IN 2010. HE WRITES AS FOLLOWS:

I was born in a small town in the Transkei, Eastern Cape, called Cala. Both my mother and father were school teachers.

In 1967, I had come to Cape Town to take up a holiday job. The arrangement had been that during the ploughing season, my uncle would go to Willowvale, Transkei, and be involved in ploughing. He would obviously take a long leave to which he would ordinarily not have been entitled. The arrangement was that he would leave me substituting for him as a messenger for the advocates on the 9th and 10th floors, and his return to work would coincide with the time that I had to return to where I came from.

This dovetailed well with my own pro-

gramme. I was a first year BA student at the University of Fort Hare in 1967. Our examinations were over by the end of October, and I could come to Cape Town and earn pocket money before proceeding back to university in the following year.

When I assumed duties, my uncle was there during October/November to orientate me in how his job could best be performed. From what I can recall, there were two of them who worked for the 9th floor. The person who was employed as the switchboard operator was an African male originally from Fort Beaufort, I think. His name was Johnson. I have now forgotten what his surname was.

The floor manager on the 9th floor was Advocate John Foxcroft (as he then was). I

noticed that Johnson was one of those officious Africans in what was arguably a privileged job. To operate the switchboard, and to field some calls was a prestigious job, and he regarded himself as hierarchically superior to my uncle, Alfred Sidumo, who was the messenger in the group.

Johnson would come and get to the switchboard, put on his earphones, sitting in front of this board that had holes into which you would stick the metal end of a telephone wire which would then trigger a ring in the chamber of the advocate who was being phoned. He had mastered the art of always responding to any incoming call by saying ‘Advocate Gerald Gordon’s chambers, good morning? Advocate John Foxcroft’s chambers, good afternoon’, and so on. Because Johnson, at some stage, had to take lunch, he had the duty to orientate my uncle, and therefore me, in this ‘treasured’

Dumisa Ntsebeza SC is inter alia a member of the Judicial Service Commission and chairperson of Barloworld.