



Directors: Collen Matshitse, Bangiso Mhlabeni

training as a cornerstone to the advancement of this firm, Bangiso Mhlabeni Incorporated has developed its training to ensure that staff share assignments and for ever position created, a second individual is trained should that position become vacant.

"We believe that training will provide this firm with an in-house skills pool when the time comes to expand the firm beyond its current dual partnership, which will not be in the distant future," says Mhlabeni.

As the legal industry continues to transform, Matshitse shares a few of the challenges it is faced with. He explains that there is strength in numbers as a number of white-owned law firms have indicated, by merging with other similar firms or black-owned law firms to conform to the laws of the day and broaden their areas of expertise. "That is how they increase their market share in the industry, which they use as an advantage when tendering for work," says Matshitse. "Yet a number of black-owned law firms - despite their lack of experience fail to meet the require-

# black law firms unite

by Rozalia Whitehead

Bangiso Mhlabeni Incorporated Attorneys is a law firm born out of the need to make a significant impact on the lives of ordinary South Africans.

The brain child of the Director, Bangiso Mhlabeni, who after numerous years in the service of various law firms, decided to take up the challenge and the opportunity presented by the changing political & socioeconomic circumstances of the country and to position himself at the centre of the new developments.

Established in 2003, eight members make up staff of which three are candidate attorneys and five women. Today the firm specialises in a number of areas namely: property law; commercial law; corporate law; employment law; contract law; civil and general litigation; international trade law and international business law; and mining and mineral law.

Board member of notary examiners and one of the first black conveyancer and public notary in 1994 and 1995 respectively in the North West province, Director Collen Matshitse, believes that as there are few black law firms dealing with corporate law as a result of past imbalances, one important role of this firm is to be a facilitator in the transferral or the development of skills in the law profession.

Mhlabeni notes there was tremendous transformation in staff morale when this mission was implemented. After identifying

ments to tender for assignments, but still prefer to tender alone."

"Hence, South Africa still does not have a longstanding, formidable large black-owned law firm to compete with its white counterpart," says Mhlabeni. "There are too many black-owned law firms who want to operate in the market by themselves, which is dominated by large white-owned law firms who continue to enjoy a significant portion of the market." He highlights that by uniting to establish one large law firm, that black lawyers will begin to take their place as majority stakeholders in the legal industry.

One area in particular Mhlabeni has seen the benefit of, is belonging to an association, especially in the conveyancing market. He adds that they provide a platform to popularise the firm, they are networking forums and where Mhlabeni has picked up on leads to assignments. These associations include the Black Conveyancers Association, the South African Property Owners Association, the South African Institute of Black Property Practitioners and The Institute of Directors.

In closing Matshitse adds that South Africa yearns for the success story of a large black law firm, and the possibility of this coming to being lies in all black-owned law firms uniting.