

Harry Korrell, '93

Harry Korrell, '93, a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine in Seattle, was the lead attorney for the victorious plaintiffs in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case decided earlier this year, *Parents Involved in*



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Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1, in which the Court held that the school district's use of a race preference to decide who could attend popular high schools violated the 14th Amendment. Korrell wrote the demand letter for his clients in the case in 2000 and worked on it, pro bono, since then, including arguing it before the Court.

He credits the Law School and his fellow students for lessons that helped him succeed, saying: "My experience at the Law School prepared me not just to handle a case like this, but to recognize the opportunity and to decide that I was in as good a position as anyone to take this on. That didn't come from the classroom alone. I think I learned as much from fellow students as I did from the faculty. I saw others with the confidence to step up and solve a problem, rather than waiting for someone else to do it. The Edmund Burke Society is a great example. Some students saw the need for that institution, and they created it, building on their experiences with similar institutions at other schools. They didn't wait for someone else to do it, and they created one of the University's enduring traditions. That lesson is one of the most important from my time at the Law School."

Korrell came to the Law School after earning a degree in philosophy, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Washington. After law school he returned to Seattle to join a small firm and then he worked as an associate in Washington D.C. before joining Davis Wright in 1996. Named a "Super Lawyer" by *Washington Law & Politics* magazine in each of the past four years, his practice areas focus on employment and commercial litigation, and he has extensive experience litigating cases involving noncompetition agreements, theft of intellectual property, and unfair competition allegations.

He also has handled several high-profile election law cases, representing the Washington State Republican Party and then-Governor-elect Dino Rossi in the legal battles over the 2004 governor's race that culminated in a rare gubernatorial election contest trial, and serving as Special Assistant Attorney General representing Washington's Secretary of State in mandamus actions in the Washington State Supreme Court, in which the Governor sought to prevent a referendum measure from reaching the ballot.

While dealing with the crush of media requests after the *Parents Involved* decision and preparing to begin a hard-earned sabbatical with his wife and two children (his wife, Elizabeth, also graduated from the Law School in 1993), Korrell told *The Record* what he most wanted alumni to understand about the case: "I hope they'll read the fact section of the opinion, because at least two aspects have been overlooked in the media coverage. First, much of the reporting suggests that the plaintiff parent association consisted of white families who didn't want their kids to attend 'minority' schools. In fact, the association included both white and nonwhite members, and many minority students were denied admission to the high quality schools they wanted to go to because the district wanted more white students in those schools, just as white students were turned away in favor of minority applicants. That aspect of the case didn't fit with the story some reporters were determined to write."

"Second," he said, "this was not a matter of the district trying to integrate schools that were segregated. The schools at issue were a model of what the Court wanted to happen as a result of the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and there's no reason to think they won't stay that way. When the suit was filed, if the district had not used the race preference at all the percentage of nonwhite students at the three 'whitest' schools in the district would have been between 37 and 45 percent, just based on the choices made by students and their parents. It's hard to call those 'segregated' schools. And seven years later – five years after the district was ordered to stop using the race preference – these schools look much the same. The school district seemed obsessed with having a race preference, even though it did very little to change the racial composition of the schools and nothing to improve the quality of education."