

# Commemorative Plaque Honors Karl B. Friedman's Vital Role in Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement

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*This content was published prior to the combination of Dentons Sirote. Learn more about Dentons Sirote.*

The 1960s were a turbulent time in the South, with racial tensions rising during the Civil Rights Movement. One of Sirote's founders, Karl B. Friedman, was at the forefront of advocating for civil rights in Birmingham—so much so that an unknown person who disagreed with his stance on civil rights shot a bullet through the front window of Karl's home. Karl once said, "If I sell the house, I'm going to take that window."

To commemorate the bullet hole incident, as well as Karl's enduring legacy both for the firm and the city, a plaque has been installed in his former office at Sirote & Permutt's Birmingham location, which has since been named the Karl B. Friedman Conference Room. To celebrate, a dedication ceremony took place today with employees and Karl's family in attendance.

Karl Friedman was an inspiration and a role model. He was a superb lawyer for many reasons. His knowledge of the law was encyclopedic; his skill and eloquence as an advocate were unsurpassed. In addition to his wit, Karl possessed a powerful intellect and a compassionate heart. Karl was a mentor to generations of young attorneys in the firm. He taught them that it wasn't enough to know the law; you had to understand people.

For his clients, he was a passionate advocate who, more times than not, became a personal friend. "Karl had a gift with people," says Sirote attorney Maury Shevin. "He had a natural way that was impossible to resist. He would make you feel like you were the most important person to him." He "was always sincere." His affinity for helping people made his office a destination for those who had significant issues without solutions. He believed in redemption, could find worth and dignity in nearly everyone, and didn't judge people by the isolated decisions they made. People were his passion.

Karl will perhaps be most remembered among clients as a visionary counselor, tendering his advice with endless kindness, keen wisdom, and solid pragmatism. Among his counseling skills was the uncanny ability to affirm, to make those he touched feel better about themselves. Counseling was what he loved. People hesitated to make important business and personal decisions without obtaining Karl's sage advice.

Few moments in history illustrate Karl's strength and courage more than his willingness to take on the hard work necessary to move our community and our country forward during the volatile years of the Civil Rights era. As protests and marches rocked the city, Karl and other leaders of the community coordinated their support of the Civil Rights leaders.

Through the early part of his career, Karl suffered many indignities and acts of hatred that might have caused lesser men to surrender to the pressure. Besides the gunshot, someone once burned his entire front yard with hateful speech. But Karl remained steadfast, continuing to advocate for the under-represented, raise money, and represent the movement's leaders.

Karl passed away on April 4, 2018, but the firm strives to preserve his memory and legacy. We aspire to “work hard, be available to our clients at all times, and produce quality work.” It was for these qualities, and for so many other reasons that his clients adored him, his law partners delighted in him, and we all rejoiced in this remarkable man who did so very much for so many. Karl Friedman devoted his life to his family, his firm, and his community. And we loved him in return. We are so delighted to dedicate the Karl B. Friedman Conference Room today in his memory and to share one of his many stories with all who have the privilege of meeting in that space.

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