

1976

Barbara Nancy Astorga v. Richard George Julio : Brief of Appellant

Utah Supreme Court

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Reading & Snow; Attorneys for Respondent.

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IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE STATE OF UTAH

MARA NANCY ASTORGA,
Plaintiff and Respondent,

vs.

Case No. 10-00000000

AND GEORGE JULIO,
Defendant and Appellant.

BRIEF OF APPELLANT

APPEAL FROM THE JUDGMENT OF THE
DISTRICT COURT FOR SALT LAKE COUNTY
HONORABLE MARCELLUS K. SNOW, JUDGE

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FILED

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENT OF KIND OF CASE	1
DISPOSITION IN LOWER COURT	1
RELIEF SOUGHT ON APPEAL	2
STATEMENT OF FACTS	2
STATEMENT OF POINTS	3
ARGUMENT	3
POINT I. THE PLAINTIFF, HAVING ELECTED TO PROCEED UNDER THE BASTARDY ACT, IS PRECLUDED FROM SEEKING MODIFICATION OF THE JUDGMENT RENDERED THEREUNDER THROUGH A NEW AND SEPARATE CIVIL ACTION	3
POINT II. PLAINTIFF'S ACTION AGAINST THE DEFENDANT IS A COLLATERAL ATTACK ON A PRIOR JUDGMENT AND MUST BE DISMISSED	4
POINT III. THE EVIDENCE IS INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE FINDING OF THE COURT THAT THERE EXISTED SUFFICIENT CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES TO WARRANT A MODIFICATION OF THE SUPPORT ORDER	5
CONCLUSION	6

CASES CITED

Brown v. Marrelli, Utah 2d , 527 P. 2d 230 (1974)	3
Erickson v. McCullough, 91 Utah 159, 63 P. 2d 595 (1937)	4
State of Utah v. Richard Julio, Third Judicial District Court, Salt Lake County, criminal case number 20016	2

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

STATUTES CITED

Utah Code Annotated 1953, as amended:

77-60-1, et seq.

78-45a-1, et seq.

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE STATE OF UTAH

BARBARA NANCY ASTORGA,)

Plaintiff and Respondent,)

vs.)

Case No. 14526

RICHARD GEORGE JULIO,)

Defendant and Appellant.)

BRIEF OF APPELLANT

STATEMENT OF KIND OF CASE

This is a civil action by the plaintiff to modify the judgment and order rendered against the appellant in a criminal bastardy proceeding.

DISPOSITION IN LOWER COURT

Defendant's Motion to Dismiss prior to trial was denied. The case was heard by the Court, which ordered that the child support payments by the defendant in behalf of Todd Troy be increased from \$50.00 to the sum of \$75.00 per month.

RELIEF SOUGHT ON APPEAL

Defendant seeks reversal of the lower court's Order and judgment in his favor and dismissal of plaintiff's order, and in the alternative, a new trial.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On March 15, 1967, in the matter of State of Utah v. Richard Julio, Third Judicial District Court, Salt Lake County, criminal case number 20016, the jury found the defendant guilty of being the father of a minor child, Todd Troy born to the plaintiff herein, and the Court ordered the defendant to pay child support in the amount of \$50.00 per month, plus medical expenses incurred in connection with the birth of said minor child. The defendant has fully performed according to the court's order.

On or about November 17, 1975, plaintiff filed the within action and subsequently obtained the issuance of an Order to Show Cause in re Modification wherein plaintiff sought modification of the judgment and order in the previous bastardy proceeding, seeking an increase in the monthly child support payment to \$100.00. Defendant's pretrial Motion to Dismiss was denied from which defendant appeals.

Upon trial of the issue, the lower court ordered that child supp

payments by the defendant in behalf of said minor child be increased to \$75.00 per month, from which order the defendant appeals.

STATEMENT OF POINTS

POINT I. THE PLAINTIFF, HAVING ELECTED TO PROCEED UNDER THE BASTARDY ACT, IS PRECLUDED FROM SEEKING MODIFICATION OF THE JUDGMENT RENDERED THEREUNDER THROUGH A NEW AND SEPARATE CIVIL ACTION.

POINT II. PLAINTIFF'S ACTION AGAINST THE DEFENDANT IS A COLLATERAL ATTACK ON A PRIOR JUDGMENT AND MUST BE DISMISSED.

POINT III. THE EVIDENCE IS INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE FINDING OF THE COURT THAT THERE EXISTED SUFFICIENT CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES TO WARRANT A MODIFICATION OF THE SUPPORT ORDER.

ARGUMENT

POINT I.

THE PLAINTIFF HAVING ELECTED TO PROCEED UNDER THE BASTARDY ACT, IS PRECLUDED FROM SEEKING MODIFICATION OF THE JUDGMENT RENDERED THEREUNDER THROUGH A NEW AND SEPARATE CIVIL ACTION.

In Brown v. Marrelli, Utah 2d 527 P. 2d 230 (1974), this Court, citing its own recent decisions, held that the Bastardy Act, Section 77-60-1 et seq., U.C.A. (1953, as amended) and the Uniform Act on Paternity, Section 78-45a-1, et seq., U.C.A. (1953, as amended) are alternative remedies and that the election to pursue one precludes subsequent use of

the other. The plaintiff herein elected to proceed under the criminal Bastardy Act, and is obviously now prohibited from proceeding under the civil Uniform Act on Paternity for additional relief. Instead, the plaintiff has instituted a civil action of her own invention to modify the judgment rendered in the Bastardy Act proceeding. The Brown case, cited above, dictates that when the plaintiff elects her remedy against the putative father, she is bound by that election regarding the subsequent attempts to enforce or modify any resulting judgment. Plaintiff must be permitted to do indirectly that which this Court has prohibited her from doing directly. Accordingly, plaintiff's action must be dismissed.

POINT II.

PLAINTIFF'S ACTION AGAINST THE DEFENDANT IS A COLLATERAL ATTACK ON A PRIOR JUDGMENT AND MUST BE DISMISSED.

This Court ruled in Erickson v. McCullough, 91 Utah 159, 63 P.2d 595 (1937), that a judgment is not subject to collateral attack when the Court had jurisdiction of the subject matter and the parties. This recognized rule was violated when the plaintiff filed a new and separate civil action to modify the judgment rendered in the earlier criminal bastardy proceedings. Plaintiff should not be permitted to make this collateral attack on that judgment. Instead, she should be limited to seeking her additional remedy under the style and number of the original

proceedings. Her attempt to do otherwise must be dismissed.

POINT III.

THE EVIDENCE IS INSUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE FINDING OF THE COURT THAT THERE EXISTED SUFFICIENT CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES TO WARRANT A MODIFICATION OF THE SUPPORT ORDER.

The Plaintiff fails to establish sufficient facts of changed circumstances to support a modification of the original order. The Plaintiff testified (Transcript 26, Lines 2-16) that at the time of the original order she had no income but that her income has increased to \$680.00 per month (T. 26 L.8-11). On the other hand, the defendant testified his net income has increased only by \$88.48 since the original order was entered (T. 11 L. 19-22). Clearly, the facts do not warrant the modification entered by the trial court.

An error in computation of the plaintiff's payroll deductions is apparent, a mis-stated fact which may have been relied upon by the Court in arriving at its decision. At one point, the plaintiff, under cross examination, indicates that \$6.62 per month is withheld for retirement (T. 24 L. 14). Under re-direct examination (T. 28 L. 23), the plaintiff indicates the retirement figure is \$62.62, the discrepancy being more than the gross increase in support ordered by the Court. This confusion must be clarified, requiring a new trial of this issue.

CONCLUSION

The Plaintiff has attempted a practice which, unchecked, would result in a veritable flood of litigation with every displeased party being free to file yet another separate action to impeach or modify an earlier judgment. This Court has unequivocally stated that a mother may seek relief against her child's putative father in either of two court proceedings, civil or criminal. Decisions of this Court, judicial economy, and common sense dictate that once that choice is made, all further related proceedings should and must be brought under the original case style and number, a course of action which Plaintiff admits was contemplated at one time (T. 27 L. 14-28).

The facts contained in the record do not support a judgment modification even if the Plaintiff had proceeded correctly, and at best are inconclusive and even confusing, requiring a new trial of the issue if the judgment is not reversed. However, it is clear that the judicial system would be best served by reversal of the lower court's decision.

Respectfully submitted,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF THE NATURE OF THE CASE.....	1
DISPOSITION IN LOWER COURT.....	1
RELIEF SOUGHT ON APPEAL.....	2
STATEMENT OF FACTS.....	2
ARGUMENT.....	3
POINT I THE APPELLANT-PLAINTIFF HAS A SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN CHOOSING HIS FORUM AND ONLY IN RARE CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A COURT DISMISS ON GROUNDS OF FORUM NON CONVEN- IENS.....	3
POINT II WHERE ONE OR MORE OF THE LITIGANTS ARE UTAH RESIDENTS THE DOCTRINE OF FORUM NON CONVENIENS SHOULD NOT BE APPLICABLE OR SEVERELY RESTRICTED TO APPLY ONLY IN CASES WHERE OVERWHELMING INCONVENIENCE IS SHOWN.....	5
POINT III APPELLANT'S CHOICE OF FORUM IS FAIR FOR ALL PARTIES AND PLAINTIFF WILL BE UNDULY BURDENED IF FORCED TO MAINTAIN ITS SUIT IN FLORIDA.....	8
CONCLUSION.....	12

AUTHORITIES CITED

CASES

De La Bouillerie v. De Vienne, 300 N.Y. 60, 89 N.E.2d 15 (1949).....	6
First National Bank and Trust Co. v. Pomona Machinery Co., 107 Ariz. 286, 486 P.2d 184 (1971).....	5
Goodwine v. Superior Court, 63 Cal.2d 481, 47 Cal.Rptr. 201, 407 P.2d 1 (1965).....	7
Gulf Oil Corp. v. Gilbert, 330 U.S. 501 (1947).....	4,5
Hadler v. Western Greyhound Racing Circuit, 34 Cal.App.3d 1, 109 Cal.Rptr. 502 (1973).....	7
Lau v. Chicago & N.W. Ry. Co., 14 Wis.2d 329, 111 N.W.2d 158 (1961).....	8
Loftus v. Lee, 308 S.W.2d 654 (Mo. 1958).....	5
Mooney v. Denver & R.G.W.R. Co., 118 Utah 307, 221 P.2d 628 (1950).....	4,5,9, 10,11, 12
Mr. Steak, Inc. v. Ken-Mar Steaks, Inc., 522 P.2d 1246 (Colo. 1974).....	5
Propulsion Systems, Inc. v. Avondale Shipyards, Inc., 77 Misc.2d 259, 352 N.Y.S.2d 749 (Sup. Ct. 1973)...	8
Silver v. Great American Insurance Co., 29 N.Y.2d 356, 278 N.E.2d 619, 328 N.Y.S.2d 398 (1972).....	7
Thomson v. Continental Insurance Co., 66 Cal.2d 738, 59 Cal.Rptr. 101, 427 P.2d 765 (1967).....	7
Zurich v. Inman, 221 Tenn. 393, 426 S.W.2d 767 (1968)...	10

OTHER AUTHORITIES

20 Am.Jur., Courts Sec. 172-79 (1965).....	4
--	---

90 A.L.R.2d 1109 "Doctrine of forum non conveniens: assumption or denial of jurisdiction of contract action involving foreign elements".....	4
87 A.L.R. 1425 "Assumption of or refusal to assume jurisdiction by court of one state or country, of action on contract involving foreign elements".....	4
Barrett, The Doctrine of Forum Non Conveniens, 35 Cal.L.Rev. 380 (1947).....	4