
Transsexual "Winner" in Custody Dispute

In an extraordinarily lengthy and detailed opinion setting out factual findings concerning a complicated child custody proceeding, Connecticut Superior Court Judge Dranginis

has ordered that the two children of a male-to-female transsexual live with her and her new husband rather than with their mother during the school year, with liberal weekend and vacation visitation rights for the mother. *M. v. M.; U. v. U.*, 1996 WL 434302 (July 11).

Mrs. M. was married first to Mr. U., with whom she had two children, then to Mr. M., with whom she had two more children prior to divorcing Mr. M., who now lives with his parents. Mr. U. underwent a sex-change operation, becoming Ms. U., then married Mr. O'N. In this proceeding, the court had to determine custody and visitation rights for this blended family, taking into account the recommendations of court-appointed experts that the four children, who had bonded together as a sibling group, should have their sibling tie preserved. The court concluded that Mrs. M., Mr. M., and Mrs. U. O'N. were all competent parents, but that Mr. M. and Mrs. U. O'N. (the former Mr. U.) were the preferable parents to have custody of their respective children. The court found that the U. children had adjusted to their father's sex-change, now referring to her as "Mommy" but suffered tension over the need to keep the fact of the sex-change operation a secret. The court found no other adverse effect on the children, and made no comments about any potential adverse effect to children of being raised by a post-operative transsexual parent. (Quite an enlightened change from some other opinions we've seen in the past concerning transsexual parents.) The opinion is sometimes confusing to read, as the court's references to Mrs. U.O'N. change pronoun genders frequently. The court appears quite respectful of Mrs. U.O'N. and treats the sex-change and her current status in a matter-of-fact way. A.S.L.
