

## Economist ordered to pay \$11K a month per Thai triplet

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A Chicago economic consultant will have to pay \$11,000 per month for each triplet he fathered through assisted conception methods in Thailand, a Cook County judge ruled.

Circuit Judge Jeanne Cleveland Bernstein's Friday order is the latest in a series of legal bouts between Harlow Higinbotham, 71, and the mother of his children, Wipaporn Teekhungam, 41.

The two first met in 2001 when Higinbotham worked in Bangkok. Teekhungam and Higinbotham saw each other a few times a year and participated in a traditional Thai wedding ceremony in 2004, although the couple never legally registered their marriage.

Teekhungam found out Higinbotham was already married about a year before the ceremony.

She gave birth to triplet sons in November 2008 after the couple underwent IVF treatment. Higinbotham financially supported Teekhungam and his children until September 2009.

Bernstein's modification order requires a trust be set up for each child to ensure they receive the funds, given Higinbotham's age, his refusal to pay child support and his "obsessive tendency" to deny he is the father. The order is retroactive to April 1, 2013.

Child support was initially set by a court in Thailand in 2010 at \$500 per month per child.

The issue came to Cook County after Higinbotham refused to abide by the Thai court order. A British court — Teekhungam and the children reside in England — declined to hear the case.

Cook County took jurisdiction of the case for the child support modification request as "there was no other court where the children could be granted the relief they require."

Teekhungam contended eight years later the award is "insufficient" as her children's needs have changed and she is unable to adequately support them with the current amount.

She also argued one of the reasons why she is unable to provide her children with what they need is she is in considerable debt because of what she has spent to defend herself and her children from Higinbotham's "incessant litigation."

Given those reasons Bernstein determined Teekhungam met her burden of proof that a “substantial change in circumstances” has occurred to justify increasing child support.

Higinbotham argued child support should not be increased due to a change in circumstances because he never gave the Thai court information about his finances when they first set an amount.

Bernstein rejected his argument.

One of Teekhungam’s requests included having the money to send the children to private school as her children’s education and lives would improve if they did.

While Bernstein recognized it may be in the children’s best interest, she declined to order private school tuition at this time.

Bernstein determined Teekhungam was credible and testified in a clear manner but Higinbotham was not, pointing to his attempt at disguising the true value of his finances.

Gemma B. Allen and Michael Levy of Allen & Glassman Chtd. represents Teekhungam.

Allen said Bernstein’s decision provides justice to Teekhungam and the children.

“For children justice delayed can be justice denied,” she said. “Whatever their mother could’ve provided them in the very beginning, even that has been diminished by the lawsuits brought against her.”

The children were represented by Howard H. Rosenfeld and Vanessa L. Hammer of Rosenfeld Hafron Shapiro & Farmer.

Higinbotham is represented by John M. D’Arco, Enrico J. Mirabelli and Matthew D. Elster of Beermann LLP in addition to David F. Wentzel of Wentzel Law Offices.

They could not be reached for comment.

The case is *In Re: The Parentage of Wipaporn Teekhungam and Harlow Niles Higinbotham*, 11 D 6475.

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