

Stephen Cleghorn Jefferson County, PA

Dr. J. Stephen Cleghorn (who spent 30 years in the nonprofit sector serving the homeless) and his wife Dr. Lucinda Hart-González (who worked in language, arts and humanities in multiple universities and at the State Department) own and operate a 50-acre certified organic farm and licensed goat dairy in Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania. “We’ve poured the last six years of our savings into that farm,” said Stephen. The farm has been successful, earning its keep and making a small profit by producing healthy organic vegetables and fresh goat milk products – such as Chevre and Feta cheeses, bottled milk and drinkable yogurts – along with eggs from their pastured flock of 80 chickens. Much of the farm’s success has come from a loyal consumer-base who seek food free of the harmful chemicals and additives in food produced by the industrial model.

Six years ago, ***Stephen and Lucinda committed themselves to creating a farm that, as Stephen put it, “helps to heal our environment – our atmospheric, aquatic and botanic commons by which all human and animal life is sustained.”*** They joined a growing movement in agriculture to be small and local for the greater health of themselves and their community.

Two years ago, in August 2009, Stephen and Lucinda learned that their land had been leased for an \$80,000 signing bonus by the owner of the gas rights. When the couple bought the property in 2005 they knew the gas rights had been severed (a practice known as a “split-estate”), but their understanding was this meant they might have to put up with a relatively small “shallow” gas well being put on their farm in a location over which they would have some control.

At approximately the same time Stephen and Lucinda bought their farm, the first unconventional gas well was being drilled into the Marcellus Shale in Washington County, Pennsylvania. A Marcellus Shale well – which consumes 5 to 10 acres of their land – is being permitted just 3,500 feet from their house, upwind of the organic pastures on which their goats graze and their hay is made.

“There is a grand experiment being performed on the people of Pennsylvania,” said Stephen. “After a year of research, it has become evident to me that [the industry and the DEP] have no proof that high volume hydraulic fracturing is safe for our environment in the long-term. They are doing something the consequences of which they have no idea.” Further research revealed to the couple that more than 200,000 wells are expected to be drilled in Pennsylvania and a “gas field” constructed to take the gas to market over the next 50 years. More than 13 million tons of chemicals, some extremely toxic in microscopic concentrations, will be seeded into the Marcellus shale with the possibility of finding their way into aquifers over the next few decades. Stephen now holds community education forums to share the facts that he and Lucinda have learned. In a statement directed to the gas industry Stephen said, “The lovely daughters of hope are courage and anger. . . I will stand in your way as a gas drilling ban of one man if I have to.”

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