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What Then Must We Do?: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution

Gar Alperovitz

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Gar Alperovitz : What Then Must We Do?: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Then Must We Do?: Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Offers limited alternatives to our current world-systemBy James R NewlinI like reading books with radical and new ideas, and this book is disappointing. There are much better

anarchist/radical ideas. He lost me here: "Truth be told, most Americans in their heart of hearts almost certainly think she was right and cannot really imagine any genuine alternative. (Or they have simply given up on "systems." There are some pretty serious anarchists out there these days.)"

Never before have so many Americans been more frustrated with our economic system, more fearful that it is failing, or more open to fresh ideas about a new one. The seeds of a new movement demanding change are forming. But just what is this thing called a new economy, and how might it take shape in America? In *What Then Must We Do?* Gar Alperovitz speaks directly to the reader about where we find ourselves in history, why the time is right for a new-economy movement to coalesce, what it means to build a new system to replace the crumbling one, and how we might begin. He also suggests what the next system might look like; and where we can see its outlines, like an image slowly emerging in the developing trays of a photographer's darkroom, already taking shape. He proposes a possible next system that is not corporate capitalism, not state socialism, but something else entirely; and something entirely American. Alperovitz calls for an evolution, not a revolution, out of the old system and into the new. That new system would democratize the ownership of wealth, strengthen communities in diverse ways, and be governed by policies and institutions sophisticated enough to manage a large-scale, powerful economy. For the growing group of Americans pacing at the edge of confidence in the old system, or already among its detractors, *What Then Must We Do?* offers an elegant solution for moving from anger to strategy.

From Booklist With the gulf between the wealthy haves and unwealthy have-nots growing year by year in America, more and more people are becoming disenchanted with so-called free-market capitalism. Political economist Alperovitz takes the pulse of this collective fiscal dissatisfaction here and offers some tantalizing but well-grounded ideas about closing the income gap without sliding into socialism. The author begins by deconstructing politics as usual and deflating the notion that progressive policies can provide much real guidance. Because banks are more stable these days, major crises like the recent recession are also unlikely to provoke much transformation. According to Alperovitz, something different beyond token protests and special-interest groups is necessary for true systemic change, and this difference comes in the form of more worker-owned and -operated companies, neighborhood corporations, and locally run public enterprises. Alperovitz's deliberately informal, conversational style makes normally rarefied economic concepts accessible to a wide audience, enhancing his inspiring message that, with the right strategies, a wholesale economic revolution is not only possible but achievable by well-organized, average citizens. --Carl Hays ForeWord s- "The cultural, social, and political movement begun by the American revolution is as alive as ever. Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political economy at the University of Maryland, has penned a thoughtful guide for participating in that ongoing revolution. *What Then Must We Do?* should be required reading for every concerned citizen in the United States. Alperovitz writes, 'it is possible, easiest and best to discuss the really important points about our crumbling American system, and what to do about it, in language that is understandable and accessible.' Clearly and conversationally, the author well documents his observation that the American system is crumbling. He notes that the United States, while one of the wealthiest of countries, ranks close to the lowest among advanced countries in categories such as equality, infant mortality, poverty, and life expectancy. The trends in many areas, he argues, indicate that politics, as practiced in this country, no longer responds to the major issues affecting Americans. 'What I am asking you to ponder with me is the simple fact that the system (the way that underlying institutional power is currently arranged) seems now to be producing outcomes, year in and year out, that do not much respond to the old theory of politics.' The author goes beyond the finger pointing utilized by many polemicists, and he does not abandon a basic commitment to American democratic ideals. Rejecting traditional corporate capitalism as having failed the basic needs of the majority, Alperovitz argues enthusiastically for citizens to take ownership of the means of producing wealth. He points to many examples of where people working together have improved their local economy and quality of life. He explains B corporations, allowed under the laws of several states, charged with a mission to provide benefits to the community as well as return a profit to the shareholders. He reminds the reader that there are community-based banking institutions, credit unions, which benefit all their members. Combining the best attributes of a realist with those of a dreamer, Alperovitz honestly describes the problems facing the American community while offering an attainable progressive alternative. He concludes with a Margaret Meade quote reminding us we should 'never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'" Library Journal- "[Gar] Alperovitz (political economy, Univ. of Maryland; *America Beyond Capitalism*) alternately elicits hope and despair in his discussion of the state of America's current economic system? despair because he believes it no longer works and hope in the spreading economic democratization and successful cooperatives and progressive local government ventures. Alperovitz states that corporate politics and policies that deliberately transfer wealth from the poor and middle class to the wealthy, not to mention the sustained attack on labor unions, demonstrate that the American social system is fundamentally broken. He asserts that early 20th-century progressivism, the New Deal, and the Great Society helped save America in times of crisis, and that a new paradigm in which social, environmental, and democratic policies reside at the forefront of our

political and economic development is needed. VERDICT Alperovitz's sophisticated tone both informs and engages. Recommended for all readers interested in an economic and political perspective of what's gone wrong with America. Publishers Weekly- Alperovitz (America Beyond Capitalism), a University of Maryland political economist and cofounder of the Democracy Collaborative, transcends simple political disenchantment to examine the intertwining of political and economic power and the need to develop new institutions that help the 99% obtain more of both. The atypical conditions that made possible the postwar boom fostered the development of institutions that now are losing strength. With a nod to Tolstoy, Alperovitz encourages the reader to ponder how to redress the staggeringly unequal distribution of wealth. His survey of the American landscape highlights co-ops, employee stock ownership plans, publicly owned utilities and hospitals, and other already-successful alternatives to the for-profit corporate model. By so doing, he persuasively argues, new constituencies tied to these alternative models will emerge. His emphasis throughout is on the local level, as if to emphasize the movement toward a new American community that he espouses. The reader is certain to find his views challenging, even if the schism between conventional corporatism and "New Economy" practices that Alperovitz envisions seems to evoke the gulf between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Booklist- "With the gulf between the wealthy haves and unwealthy have-nots growing year by year in America, more and more people are becoming disenchanted with so-called free-market capitalism. Political economist [Gar] Alperovitz takes the pulse of this collective fiscal dissatisfaction here and offers some tantalizing but well-grounded ideas about closing the income gap without sliding into socialism. The author begins by deconstructing politics as usual and deflating the notion that progressive policies can provide much real guidance. Because banks are more stable these days, major crises like the recent recession are also unlikely to provoke much transformation. According to Alperovitz, something different beyond token protests and special-interest groups is necessary for true systemic change, and this difference comes in the form of more worker-owned and -operated companies, neighborhood corporations, and locally run public enterprises. Alperovitz's deliberately informal, conversational style makes normally rarefied economic concepts accessible to a wide audience, enhancing his inspiring message that, with the right strategies, a wholesale economic revolution is not only possible but achievable by well-organized, average citizens." Kirkus - "Any cure for America's economic plight lies deeper than politics as usual, argues an author who believes that a fundamental, radical, systemic transformation offers the possibility of an economic corrective. Alperovitz (Political Economy/Univ. of Maryland; America Beyond Capitalism, 2004) argues that a faulty sense of history underlies what little faith remains in economic progress through conventional politics. . . . the author believes he 'offers a reasonably hopeful sense of the future, and a strategy aimed at possibly getting there.' Such hope lies in 'the democratization of wealth,' through employee-owned companies, regional co-ops, the systemic transformation of the banking and health care industries into public utilities and an emphasis on 'what has often been called the triple bottom line (emphasizing people and planet in addition to profit).' And if such radical restructuring causes some to scream about socialism, he counters that 'socialism? real socialism, not the fuzzy kind conservatives try to pin on Barack Obama? is as common as grasshopper in the United States.' Alperovitz's conversational style avoids academic jargon while making complex issues easy (some might say too easy) to digest, but he's not likely to convince those of the conservative persuasion that a more hopeful future involves more collective action and government consolidation. "With his latest book, Gar Alperovitz's only adds to his status as one of the most creative and important thinkers of our time. Grappling with his arguments (even when we disagree) has been one of the chief intellectual pleasures of my reading life. For you, the immediate answer to 'What Then Must We Do?' is clear: Read this book." --Bertell Ollman, Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method "A fresh take on how to reinvigorate democracy and civic life. An analysis that transcends labels and has a real blueprint for action." --Naomi Wolf, author of End of America "Alperovitz, the intellectual leader of the economic democracy movement, has produced the most compelling account yet of how we can move beyond the piecemeal, project-by-project transformation of our political economy to truly systemic change. A must-read for anyone who cares about the future of the United States and the world." --Juliet Schor, author of True Wealth: How and Why Millions of Americans are Creating a Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small-scale, High-Satisfaction Economy "In this slender book, Gar Alperovitz does more than pack a tremendous amount of passion and wisdom about the structural ills of our society. He proposes a common-sense strategy for fixing them as well-grounded in local institutions that can construct a truly democratic economy. Every progressive should read this book and then start practicing what its author preaches." --Michael Kazin, author of American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation and editor of Dissent "If you're ready for hard-headed hope, here you go! Alperovitz's power is that he's no mere theorist of democratic change. He is also a creator practically engaged in demonstrating democratic economic solutions that work. What Then Must We Do? is packed with mind-boggling facts, thoughtful insights, and practical steps. Thank you, Gar Alperovitz, for condensing so much into this provocative gem." --Frances Moore Lappe, author of EcoMind: Changing the Way We Think, to Create the World We Want "Alperovitz revives the tradition of political economy and spells out the institutional requirements and historical likelihood of moving the United States in the direction of a democratic community. An insightful and accessible book." --Herman Daly, author of Ecological Economics "In this cooperative and democratic manifesto, Gar Alperovitz delivers his designs for a

more harmonious society? a goal long dreamed of on these shores. May his ideas and ideals flourish."--James Galbraith, author of *The Predator State* "Rigged by generations of bankers and politicians to enrich Wall Street at the expense of Main Street, the current economic system makes American workers and communities expendable by providing few alternatives to layoffs, bankruptcies, and plant closures during hard times. Gar Alperovitz knows that we must look for new ways to create and sustain good jobs. In *What Then Must We Do?*, he has outlined a practical, common sense strategy to improve our economy by making it more democratic. As the United Steelworkers has shown in its innovative partnership with Mondragon, combining employee equity with a progressive collective bargaining process results in higher accountability, productivity, and efficiency because all workers have an equal stake in the company. Instead of measuring the value of a corporation only in profits, losses, and shareholder dividends, we must take into account how the enterprise serves its community."--Leo Gerard, international president, United Steelworkers Union "The move to broadly participatory, locally rooted, cooperative ownership is essential to America's future. Gar Alperovitz presents a brilliant, accessible, and practical plan of action to make it happen."--David Korten, board chair of YES! Magazine and author of *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth* "If ever there was a time to consider new directions for our faltering economy, it is now! Gar Alperovitz's new book provides a comprehensive survey of the explosion of new cooperatives, worker-owned firms, city and state investment efforts and dozens of other 'new economy' development strategies and fashions them into a coherent strategy. Absolutely essential reading for anyone concerned with building the next Progressive Era."--Van Jones, author of *Rebuild the Dream* "Alperovitz's latest is distinguished by clear, accessible, straightforward writing that dares to raise the systemic nature of today's problems in the United States and to show why system change is therefore the necessary solution. This call for the long-overdue 'next American revolution' will move system change forward on the agendas of many."--Richard D. Wolff, author of *Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism* "There can be neither peace, nor democracy, nor social justice until we change the system that underpins the American empire and policy-crippling maldistribution of wealth. For decades, Gar Alperovitz has been at the forefront of attempts to understand what could lie beyond our increasingly-broken system of corporate capitalism. This book offers by far the most serious, intellectually grounded strategy for system-changing yet to appear. It could be the most important movement-building book of the new century--and, thereby, one of the most important political books as well."--Daniel Ellsberg, author of *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* and cofounder of the Freedom of the Press Foundation "Gar Alperovitz is the rare economist who begins with the idea that economic activity should reflect the social aspirations of the community rather than merely the utilitarian interest of global enterprises. He has devoted his professional career to asking the critical question of how best to ensure a more democratic and participatory economy for everyone. *What Then Must We Do?* provides a much needed, hopeful vision of how each community can take hold of its economic future and build a sustainable society."--Jeremy Rifkin, author of *The Third Industrial Revolution* "Gar Alperovitz continues to challenge us to recognize and assume responsibility for creating an America beyond capitalism."--Grace Lee Boggs, author of *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* "As Gar Alperovitz reaches an ever-larger audience, the cooperative and community based economy he is encouraging will attract increasing numbers of consumers away from big business and its corporate state. *What Then Must We Do?* offers a powerful argument, written in a conversational style to prod you into the kind of meaningful discussions that lead to more equality and accountability in our political economy."--Ralph Nader, author of *The Seventeen Solutions: Bold Ideas for Our American Future* "In this important new book, Gar Alperovitz is telling us there's something happening here in corporate-driven America, be it social enterprise, community land trusts, worker-owned businesses, or employee stock ownership plans. We all know that the free-market economic system no longer works for the vast majority of citizens and Alperovitz is showing us that there is a better, equally American way, to spread the wealth and put more people to work, while making the nation a safer and healthier place to live. This is not an utopian fantasy or a call for social engineering, but a plain-spoken and easy-to-absorb analysis by one of our leading economists of what's gone wrong and how to make it better."--Seymour M. Hersh, *The New Yorker* "Gar Alperovitz's new book is so plain-spoken and accessible that it takes a moment to appreciate the magnitude of his accomplishment. After examining new patterns of positive change emerging in America today--including many undernoticed changes that involve democratizing the ownership of wealth--he develops a brilliant strategy for the type of transformative change that can lead America from decline to rebirth. In giving a sense of strategic direction and honest possibility to the call for a new economy, Alperovitz has made an enormous contribution exactly where it is most needed."--James Gustave Speth, author of *America the Possible: Manifesto for a New Economy*

About the Author
Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, is cofounder of The Democracy Collaborative. He is a former fellow of the Institute of Politics at Harvard and of King's College at Cambridge University, where he received his PhD in political economy. He has served as a legislative director in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, and as a special assistant in the Department of State. Earlier he was president of the Center for Community Economic Development, Codirector of The Cambridge Institute, and president of the Center for the Study of Public Policy. Dr. Alperovitz's numerous articles have appeared in publications ranging from The New York Times and The

Washington Post to The Journal of Economic Issues, Foreign Policy, Diplomatic History, and other academic and popular journals. His previous books are *America Beyond Capitalism* (a new edition of which appeared in 2011),
The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb, published in 1995, the 2002 book, *Making a Place for Community: Local Democracy in a Global Era* (with Thad Williamson and David Imbroscio), and the 2008 book *Unjust Deserts* (with Lew Daly).