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Political Science

What Then Must We Do? Straight Talk about the Next American Revolution
Gar Alperovitz
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Corporate capitalism has gone horribly wrong, author says. What we need is a citizen takeover.

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."

Gar Alperovitz earned his PhD in political economy from King's College at Cambridge University. He has written articles for publications such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Diplomatic History*. Additionally, he is the author of several books, including *America Beyond Capitalism*, published in 2011.

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