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unless we build an entirely new politics around a new vision, we're always on the defensive.

A.B.: *In the 2016 presidential primary, a lot of Americans supported a candidate who identified as a "democratic socialist." That's significant, right?*

G.A.: It was revealed that a lot of people didn't worry about the word "socialism." When I was younger, the word "socialism" was regarded as something outrageous, and it no longer is, which is a big gain. Let me say something about the importance of the "idea system," because usually in politics we're talking about changing real, material things, like housing and health care and welfare programs and payments and taxes. A good part of politics is also about ideas and vision and morality, and I think that's what (Vermont Senator) Bernie Sanders' campaign showed us. The notion of giving actual words to a different direction is important because it helps people mobilize and get together and think of something very different. The polls showed that young people are favorable to the word "socialism," but what Sanders did was demonstrate a much broader appeal.

A.B.: *Your book includes numerous examples of institution-building projects already underway in communities across the country. Are there a couple you'd like to highlight?*

G.A.: The idea that we should have publicly owned banks so that they can allocate funds to, for instance, worker co-ops or land ownership at the neighborhood-level is exciting, and several cities are beginning to do that. The state of North Dakota has had a publicly owned bank for a hundred years, which came out of populist socialist movements, and it is very successful. There are now active movements for public banks in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Santa Fe, Denver, Los Angeles, Oakland and several other cities.

Another project that has received a lot of attention and that we (the Democracy Collaborative) have been involved with is in Cleveland, Ohio. A group of worker-owned cooperatives that are quite large in scale, which include the greenest laundry in the Midwest, a greenhouse for growing crops in the winter that produces 3 million head of lettuce a year, and a solar installation company are linked together in a neighborhood corporation that is neighborhood-wide. It's not just free-standing co-ops because the idea is to build the neighborhood too, not just the workers and the work of co-ops. So the hospitals and universities in the area buy from this complex of worker and community-ownership [through a] neighborhood institution called the Evergreen Cooperative. Rochester, New York, is in the process of building something similar, and there's also similar work going on in Richmond, Va., in Atlanta, Ga., and in Jackson, Miss.

A.B.: *Anything else you'd like to say?*

G.A.: I think people need to understand that politics sometimes is a long-haul game. If you are serious about politics, the price is decades of work, not just the next election. I think we're in a period of potentially extraordinary historical change, but it means working now, looking at the long-haul building projects, not being disappointed when the trends don't change all of the sudden, but realizing that step-by-step is laying groundwork, just as the women's movement did, just as the civil rights movement did, just as the early environmental movement did. People who are working now are laying the groundwork for a big transformation, and I think it's the hardest and most exciting and most important work.

To read Gar Alperovitz's new online book, "Principles of a Pluralist Commonwealth," visit The Next System Project. To learn more about The Democracy Collaborative, visit their website, democracycollaborative.org.



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The five Valve Turners, left to right: Emily Johnston, Annette Klapstein, Leonard Higgins, Ken Ward and Michael Foster. Higgins was convicted of misdemeanor trespass and felony criminal mischief in Montana on Nov. 22. In October, Foster was found guilty of felony charges for his role in shutting down the pipeline in North Dakota. He is awaiting sentencing. Ken Ward's first trial in Washington ended in a hung jury. In July, he was tried again and convicted of burglary and sentenced to 23 days. Johnston and Klapstein are on course to go to trial in Minnesota Circuit Court after the new year.

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definitely will not support the life we've known and may not support us," Higgins said.

All five of the Valve Turners are from the Pacific Northwest. Less publicized has been the Valve Turners' mature ages: all are in their 50s and 60s. One, Annette Klapstein, is a member of the activist organization The Raging Grannies. "Part of it is the time of life," said Higgins, 65. "I'm past the age that my mother died. My dad went into a long-term decline. It's a matter of looking at life the way I've spent it and asking what's the most important thing for me to do with the years I've got left."

Those listening, however, are young. Some of the journalists arrested are in their 20s, and Higgins and other Valve Turners have been speaking at colleges across the nation. The mock trial in Missoula may have

been merely an exercise, but it explored the essential idea of what is happening with our changing climate.

"I have no idea if doing the sacrifices I'm doing is going to make a scant bit of difference with the problem," Higgins said. "But how can I live with myself and look myself in the eye if I do nothing?"

One moment from his trial he'll remember: As he left the courtroom after his conviction, a group of supporters from the Willamette Valley formed a semicircle and began to sing.

"It was just a wonderful expression of support," Higgins said.

The song they chose to sing wasn't the "Kumbaya" of the '60s or the hip-hop songs often heard in today's resistance actions.

It was "One Foot in Front of the Other," by country superstar George Strait. An anthem for a get-'er-done guy from Corvallis: "Steady as she goes ... just keep on walking / We're heading in the right direction."

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