



# **BVPS**

**Blog da Biblioteca Virtual do Pensamento Social**

## **SYMPOSIUM**

### **SOCIAL WORLD AND PANDEMIC**

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Professor Baker preferred to answer the questions in another format.

- 1. Sociologists and social scientists in general seem mobilized to interpret the social and political impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Is sociological theory up to the challenge of understanding and explaining the phenomenon?**
- 2. How can your research area contribute to examining different dimensions of the phenomenon?**
- 3. Is the pandemic provoking deep social, political and cultural changes? Or is it speeding up trends of change already underway? If so, is it possible to glimpse the contours of post-pandemic societies?**
- 4. What work(s) of Sociology or Social Sciences can help us to comprehend and dialogue about the challenges underway?**



## Things fall apart and we put them back together again

Last night our team is told to expect a code through the ethers.  
It will appear in our brain computers, activated in a house in the country.  
But I have no way to get there.  
Things fall apart and we put them back together.  
Sitting at my makeshift desk. Sun rising. Positions shifting.

Syzygy

Turning away from tasks that must be done  
Joining with the potted plants on the windowsill  
Reaching towards a veiled sun and chilly air in stillness and distance.  
Things fall apart and we must put them back together again  
in new and surprising ways.

On April 28 I woke from fitful, anxious dreaming with these words on my tongue – things fall apart, and we put them back together again. It gave me some measure of comfort for it does seem that in every corner of the planet things are falling apart. The virus has stripped away the veil. In real time we witness the best of us working together, thinking through ways to maximize collective survival in a horrifying human situation and the worst of us profiting from the situation with little regard for collective futures.

Social breakdown is not new or unusual for Indigenous communities. It wasn't so very long ago that viruses were weaponized by white settlers to eliminate the native from the American landscape. And yes so very many Indigenous nations are surviving the ongoing trauma of empire. There are lessons to be learned from them – lessons about caring and community and paying attention to the land beneath our feet, the air surrounding us.

I am an Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) scholar and educator. I teach college courses in Indigenous political theory and my research focuses on networks of resurgence and resilience within place-based social structures. This Spring I was teaching Introduction to Indigenous Political Thought to sophomores at Brown University. As the pandemic marched across the United States we studied a wealth of Indigenous scholars, learning about Indigenous knowledge production, resurgence, resiliency and how communities live in reciprocal relationship with all of existence. In the final meeting students told me that the course was unlike any they had taken because, more important than learning the “what” of Indigenous



political thought, they learned the “how” of thinking. I believe the students came away from the class with an appreciation of how Indigenous theories make worlds. They also learned a new set of tools that opened the way to understanding through multiple lenses. I am grateful that I can teach in this time of upheaval and transformation. To teach the young to think differently is crucial for it will be up to the young to put things back together again in new and surprising ways. This is my small contribution to our collective survival through this pandemic – and not just surviving but thriving in resilient futures, in a world where many worlds fit.

**Mary Tuti Baker** is joining the faculty of Fairhaven College and Canadian-American Studies at Western Washington University, USA, in Comparative Indigenous Studies. Currently she is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Political Science at Brown University, USA. She is the author of “Waiwai (Abundance) and Indigenous Futures” and “Resisting Imperial Capitalism: Sustainable self - determination strategies on Molokai, Hawai‘i.”, among others



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