What follows is sample #2 from a five-part series of opening sections of *Turkeyfoot*; for more information, contact:

staff@TRACES.org.

Happy Reading!
“Prophets are honored by everyone, except the people of their hometown and [...] their own family.”

— Mark 6:4, the New Testament of the Bible

**Introducing the Theorist**

It takes nerve for an author-historian to take on an entire system, to focus on what does not work, then to dare to suggest what is to be done to fix it. I, Dr. Michael Luick-Thrams, possess that chutzpah. Who am I? I am the offspring of ordinary farm folk who tilled the North American soil for 355 years—as of 1630 in Puritan Massachusetts, until 1985 on the Iowa prairies. I remain a devoted partner and a loyal friend, a daring next-door neighbor and caring global citizen. I am a gay man who once was a Young Republican engaged to Beth. Then, I wanted to be a farmer and a Methodist minister, who at the time planned to spend extended stints of time serving refugee camps in Thailand. Soon, however, Life conspired to have me do other things, in other places.
between those two cultures: lectures, school visits, university courses and internships, exhibits, publications, conferences, concerts, films, theatrical pieces, student exchanges and more. Part of such work involves TRACES’ staff and me living for months on end in retrofitted school buses, plying the byways of rural America as we show exhibits and give presentations about them. Out of stories about events involving ties between Germany (or Austria) and the Midwest, 1914–’48, I help people of various ages, of differing social and ethnic origins better comprehend not only these shared historical legacies, but the lessons they offer us in being wiser, kinder people today.

Like a poet, I am complex in how I think and love, yet modest in my aesthete way of life, built on voluntary simplicity: In two weeks I’ll be 57, yet owned a private car for only eight of those years; I got a credit card at 33 solely to rent cars. I have traversed the world, but never strayed far from Home in my heart. I care deeply about my land and suffer the more for its current naughtiness, egotism and spiritual drift. I am a Wendell Berry conservative and a Walt Whitman liberal, neither truly Left nor Right, but always up front. A radical centrist, I tap insights from all corners of the world, regardless of from what culture they hail. I chase wisdom in any form, anywhere, all of the time. I try to judge my brothers and sisters of all lands more on the content of their characters, less the color of their burka or sombrero. I ache for justice and well-being, everywhere, forever.

My global travels and deepest reflections have convinced me that we could do—and deserve—better; however, we are stuck in dysfunctional systems that diminish and threaten to destroy us. Thus, I write this account of what happened to me as a candidate for public office in 2016, that my experiences might shed a piercing light on sick dynamics that are killing us all. My story of the election that surprisingly produced the Trump administration can’t be understood in its totality without my delving into the psyches of my closest of kin, who eagerly elected him. “They” are us.

My tale can only have value to the extent that it offers detailed maps out of our societal cul-de-sac. Where one front might feel an impulse to dig containment walls against perceived threats from the other, we must try to build bridges. When we might most wish to extract retractions from “them,” we first must offer concessions of our roles in having gotten stuck in ideological gridlock. We can ask for apologies, but can hope to receive them only after we have owned our failures. We may not enjoy taking these steps, but we cannot move forward without doing so.

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For more information go to: www.TRACES.org
Turkeyfoot

about this book:
An eccentric gay-Quaker historian living in Germany decides on a quixotic whim—for deeply idealistic and quasi-spiritual reasons—to run for the US Senate in his native Iowa. To his consternation, he soon finds himself hip-deep in the moral quicksand of Midwestern Trumpism. Unexpectedly, he discovers that his Trump-drunk relatives embody the very electorate he has to woo. This story tells how this onetime farmboy got into this swamp, how he escaped, and how other residents of Trump Nation—if they truly care about our country and the larger world—might punch their way out of political paper bags as well. This book—two tomes woven into one, each uniquely pertinent to this historical moment—provides all Americans (as well as other mortals beyond our shores) a way out. Book One explores the cynical, two-party electoral system that both feeds and embodies the social-political deadlock our country faces; Book Two concludes with fifteen strategies for how to bridge the chasms that currently divide us: Combined, they outline how to rediscover compassion for each other at a juncture in our national and global history when either we find each other again or we all will be lost, together, forever.

about its author:
Michael Luick-Thrams (Ph.D. in 1997, Humboldt Universität in Berlin) directs two non-profit educational organizations, the TRACES Center for History and Culture in Iowa (founded 2001; www.TRACES.org) and Spuren in Germany (2011). Single, he divides his time between Iowa and Germany, where his two Hausmates consist of a goofy Swabian professor of religious history and a stuffed-toy Spaniel, Sparky.

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