



Artreach  
because creativity heals

presents

# People Like Us

by Michael Erickson

A play that explores diversity and systemic racism to engage communities in dynamic conversation.

Made possible with support from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut.

## Welcome

Rebecca Atkins, Executive Director, Artreach, Inc.

## Overview

Emma Palzere-Rae

## PEOPLE LIKE US

### Cast (in order of appearance)

Fran/Irene/Golfer:

Judy Alvarez

Dave:

Elijah Manning

Jack/Fred:

Daniel Damiano

Ada:

Ingrid Griffith

Janet/Lee/Golfer:

Mary Aranas

## Conversation

Elijah Manning and Emma Palzere-Rae, Facilitators

Thank you to the **Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut**,  
Southeast General funding 2021, for their support of this project.

**Content Warning:** This program includes depictions of micro-aggressions and use of racial slurs.

### **ARTREACH HEALS THROUGH CREATIVITY!**

Our theater, music, visual arts, and recreational programs support sustainable recovery from psychiatric disorders. Our public performances and art exhibits raise awareness about mental health and bust the stigma of mental illness, creating social change in our community.

***People Like Us*** is our first project expanding our theater for social change programming.

[www.ArtreachHeals.org](http://www.ArtreachHeals.org)

## People Like Us

Written by **Michael Erickson**

Originally commissioned by **Plays for Living** (TM)

**Produced by Artreach, Inc.**, Rebecca Atkins, Executive Director

Directed by **Emma Palzere-Rae**

Production Manager and Video Editor: **Carin Jennie Estey**

### **ARTREACH BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Julie Menders, President

Jan Hendrickson, Vice President

Melanie Nagode, Secretary

Kia Baird

Debra Lehman

Lara Schmieder

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF ARTREACH:**



Department of Economic and  
Community Development  
Office Of The Arts



R.S. Gernon Trust,  
Bank of America, N.A., Trustee



Community Foundation  
of Eastern Connecticut



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## **Diversity and Equity Program**

### ***People Like Us***

#### **Promotional Information**

**Artreach, Inc.** is pleased to offer regional mental health and community organizations a virtual recording of ***People Like Us***, a 35-minute one-act play to be followed by a facilitated discussion. *People Like Us* is not only a professional theatrical offering, but is also structured to spark productive community discussion around the issues of diversity, inclusion and systemic racism.

#### **ABOUT ARTREACH**

Artreach heals through creativity. Theater for social change has been a part of its mission since its founding in 1985. Using the creative arts, Artreach supports sustainable recovery from psychiatric disorders and raises awareness about mental health in the community-at-large. By providing theater, music, visual arts, and recreational opportunities to members, Artreach enhances the quality of its members' lives and teaches skills that help them achieve and sustain recovery after experiencing mental illnesses. Our public performances and art exhibits engage attendees in conversation about mental health and serve to bust the stigma of mental illness, creating social change in our community. Founded in 1985, Artreach is known for the Second Step Players sketch comedy troupe, the Music Heals Coffeehouse, and Mixed Bag performances of comedy and visual arts. [www.ArtreachHeals.org](http://www.ArtreachHeals.org).

#### **ABOUT *PEOPLE LIKE US* by Michael Erickson:**

Commissioned by Plays for Living (™) in 1994 to address diversity and racism in the workplace; the play quickly became one of Plays for Living's most popular programs in a variety of venues for well-over a decade. *People Like Us* explores the challenging and highly charged issues that confront society today. Set around a multi-cultural workplace and related locales, the play shows subtle, not-so-subtle and systematic ways that racism plays out in the characters' lives. There are no easy solutions; however, the play sets the stage for discussing the many actions that may be taken to successfully address the issues. Not only awareness raising, the play is a quality theatrical event that is productive a tool for social change.

This program is made possible with the support of the Community Foundation of Eastern CT.

## THE FACILITATORS

**Elijah Manning**, Co-Facilitator/Dave Davis in *People Like Us*: Growing up in a mixed family in Old Saybrook gave Elijah a unique perspective on ethnicity and cultures. He experienced the differences between people in the community. His family has a long-standing history in the town and it made for a very welcome experience, mostly, but every now and then he would experience what he would later come to realize as moments of racism. As he pursued acting and theater, Elijah was always aware of his own look being a question. He has been asked “what are you?” more times than he can count. Knowing that he was seen as a non-white individual taught him to embrace his differences. While he did have his run-ins with racism, he never let it slow down his desire to not conform to other peoples’ ideas of who he is. Elijah now takes his experiences and knowledge, as well as his empathy and desire, to make change in our communities, finding ways to continue to learn and grow. He believes that the only true ways to break down barriers between us is to spend time having conversations and learning about one another. Elijah recently joined the staff of Veterinary Emergency Group (VEG) as its DEI Associate to train its staff across the country in diversity, equity and inclusion. VEG has 27 ERs for pets in 10 states, treats over three hundred thousand pet emergencies each year.

**Emma Palzere-Rae**, Co-Facilitator/*People Like Us* Director: Emma brings a wealth of theater and social change experience. Most relevant is her experience as Artistic Director for NYC’s Plays for Living, where she produced and toured numerous plays on a variety of issues, including domestic violence, caregiving, work/live balance, and sexual harassment. During her tenure, *People Like Us* was in demand and Emma toured the country facilitating discussions of the play in corporate and community settings. Emma is also a professional theater artist and an active member of Actors Equity Association and the Dramatists Guild.

**For more information**, contact [Emma.ArreachHeals@gmail.com](mailto:Emma.ArreachHeals@gmail.com).