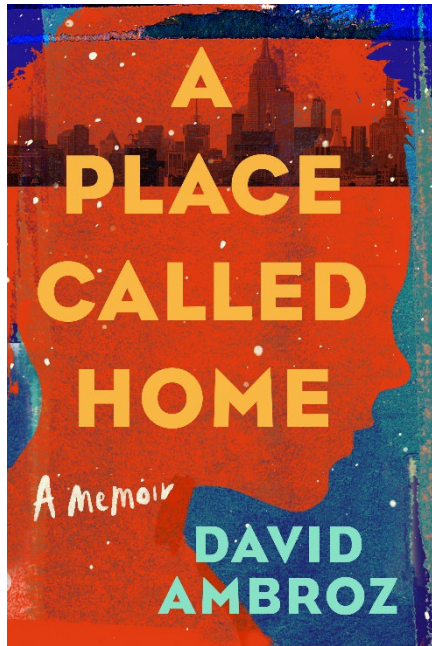


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Legacy Lit / Hachette Book Group



“*A Place Called Home* will take your breath away. It’s a must read for anyone who’s looked at a raggedy street family and asked, ‘Who are those people?’ It’s also for everyone who cares about “Those People.” You will fall in love with David Ambroz, his beautifully told, gut wrenching story, and his great big heart.”

—**Jeannette Walls**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Glass Castle*

A PLACE CALLED HOME

A MEMOIR

By **David Ambroz**

“It’s impossible to read *A Place Called Home* and not want to redouble your efforts to fight the systems of poverty that have plagued America for far too long. In this book, David shares his deeply personal story and issues a rousing call to make this a more humane and compassionate nation.” —**HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**

“Riveting. . . A haunting, inspiring chronicle of fortitude and perseverance.”
—starred review, *Kirkus Reviews*

“[A] captivating debut...Galvanizing and compassionate, this personal account of survival should be required reading.” —*Publishers Weekly*

There are millions of homeless children in America today and in **A PLACE CALLED HOME: A Memoir** (Legacy Lit Hardcover; September 13, 2022; ISBN 978-0306903540; \$30, 384 pages) award-winning child welfare advocate David Ambroz writes about growing up homeless in New York for eleven years and his subsequent years in foster care, offering a window into what so many kids living in poverty experience every day.

When David and his siblings should be in elementary school, they are instead walking the streets seeking shelter while their mother is battling mental illness. They rest in train stations, 24-hour diners, anywhere that’s warm and dry; they bathe in public restrooms and steal food to quell their hunger. When David is placed in foster care, at first it feels like salvation but soon proves to

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be just as unsafe. He's moved from home to home and, in all but one placement, he's abused. His burgeoning homosexuality makes him an easy target for other's cruelty.

David finds hope and opportunities in libraries, schools, and the occasional kind-hearted adult; he harnesses an inner grit to escape the all-too-familiar outcome for a kid like him. Through hard work and unwavering resolve, he is able to get a scholarship to Vassar College, his first significant step out of poverty. He later graduates from UCLA Law with a vision of using his degree to change the laws that affect children in poverty.

Told with lyricism and sparkling with warmth, ***A Place Called Home*** depicts childhood poverty and homelessness as it is experienced by so many young people who have been systematically overlooked and unprotected. It's at once a gripping personal account of deprivation—how one boy survived it, and ultimately thrived—and a resounding call for readers to move from empathy to action.



Author: David Ambroz
Credit: Austin Hargrave

David Ambroz is a national poverty and child welfare expert and advocate. He was recognized by President Obama as an American Champion of Change. He currently serves as the Head of Community Engagement (West) for Amazon. Previously he led Corporate Social Responsibility for Walt Disney Television, and served as the President of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission, and as a California Child Welfare Councilmember. After growing up homeless and then in foster care, he graduated from Vassar and later from UCLA School of Law (J.D.). He is a foster dad and lives in Los Angeles, CA.



Author: David Ambroz
Credit: Austin Hargrave

A conversation with David Ambroz, author of **A PLACE CALLED HOME**

What made you decide to revisit your childhood experience with poverty and in foster care in A PLACE CALLED HOME?

When I became a father, I had to confront my own past. In doing the hard work of healing, I came to see and understand that the same deprivation, violence, and poverty that my siblings and I experienced as children continue to plague so many kids across this country. I believe that by sharing my story, I can shine a light on the pervasiveness of this reality, and move people from empathy to action.

What qualities and/or circumstances allowed you to survive such deprivation and abuse? How much of it was grit and determination?

This is one of the most common questions I am asked, and I think it's actually a harmful way of framing the issue. Each person's journey is unique. We cannot map out a broad-based plan that will help the population that needs us based on one person's journey—we must develop a plan and systems that can capture all the people that need us. I am not “better” than any of my foster siblings or other kids living in shelters. “If I could get through this, so can you,” is the exact opposite of the message I want to convey—that would be a gross misreading of the book.

How did your sexuality change your foster care experience? What can the state do to make foster care safer for gay children and teens?

My foster care experience—already brutal—was almost impossible to bear because I am gay. Seeing a generation of gay men abandoned and dying from AIDS and living in a country where it remained illegal to be gay in most states until I was in my mid-30s, it sent the message that being gay was not OK. Silencing this part of myself was as hard as the physical and emotional abuse. Thankfully, progress has been made but acceptance is not enough. Affirmative policies that nurture LGBTQ+ children and recruiting diverse foster parents—including those who are LGBTQ+—are good places to start.

In this post-Roe era, there are going to be hundreds of thousands of babies born to people who aren't able to support them financially and otherwise. What do you think politicians/nonprofits/everyone needs to do to prepare for this reality?

As the debate surrounding abortion rights rages in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, children are already falling through the vast gaps in our social welfare safety net. Foster care is a boat with holes, staying afloat because of the diligent efforts of frontline social workers, foster parents, nonprofits, judges, and communities. But these efforts alone are not enough to keep children safe, and as the number of children in foster care increases, the boat will continue to sink.

As I contemplate a post-Roe world, I wonder if both sides might agree that the very system which will see an onslaught of more children—foster care—can be one thing we together might

fix. This is not a pollyannaish thought. Opposing political parties have come together to invest in expanding support for foster youth and their biological families, as with the Chaffee Independence Act of 1999 and the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018, to help prevent the need for breaking up families in the first place.

Was there a moment when you first realized, despite the trauma you endured and the scars you accumulated, that you were going to be okay?

There were a few moments that built on themselves. First was the moment when I refused to allow Mae, one of my foster parents, to erase my identity and negate my passion for learning. Another was when I was embraced by another set of foster parents, Holly and Steve, while on my way to study abroad in Spain. Still another was when I walked down the aisle to accept my college degree.

You've spoken about how you went to law school because your childhood was controlled by the law—custody laws, foster care regulations, when you could be 'emancipated' from foster care. Can you speak to that?

Early in my life I realized there was a secret language that decided my family should be forced from apartments, that my siblings and I should be removed from my mother's custody, that we should be shuttled between foster homes. That language shaped our days. I knew that if I wanted to help other children and change the system, I'd have to change the laws. One law that I helped write and pass, AB194, dramatically increased the success of foster youth as it allowed them to enroll early alongside veterans at public colleges in California before they were able to secure the classes required. Another public policy was the "model credit policy," that for the first time created a statewide formula for translating academic credit from one school district to another. Before this, foster youth transferred from one school to another, losing the credits they earned throwing up yet another barrier to their academic success. This change increased their likelihood of graduating high school.

In the book, you discuss your mother's mental illness and how systematic failures to treat her effectively impacted you and your siblings. What do you think people don't understand about living with a parent with a serious mental illness?

As a child, at each moment, I was not sure which mom was there—I never knew what to expect. I lived on a live wire. A child wants to be loved by a parent and expects to be protected and nurtured by them. When that relationship is disrupted, the world is akimbo. You become both a child and a caregiver to a parent with a mental illness—one who has the responsibility and the desire to act as an adult, but without the resources, skills or support to do so. The lack of support in our country for individuals living with mental health challenges, and their families, is a moral and economic shame.

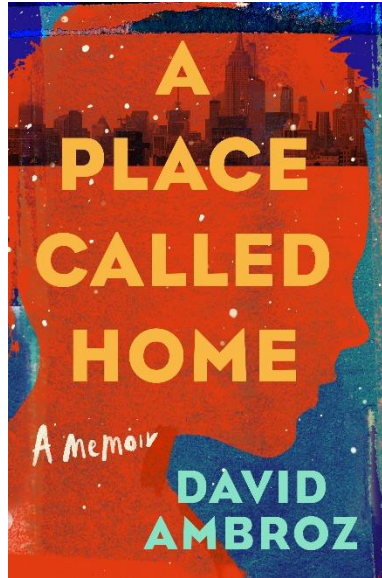
What are some things you tell foster kids when you first meet them?

They've heard enough from adults and a society that has failed them. Instead, I listen. And through listening, I learn from them how I can be a better leader and advocate for them.

What does it do to a child to lack a place they can call home?

I lived for nearly two decades on the razor's edge of instability in a persistent state of fear punctuated by moments of profound violence. To me, home is both a physical place and a mental state. Home is safety; home is surety; home is forever. Ultimately, what I came to understand was that home was a place that I created in my heart.

PRAISE FOR *A PLACE CALLED HOME* BY DAVID AMBROZ



"*A Place Called Home* will take your breath away. It's a must read for anyone who's looked at a raggedy street family and asked, 'Who are those people?' It's also for everyone who cares about "Those People." You will fall in love with David Ambroz, his beautifully told, gut wrenching story, and his great big heart." —**Jeannette Walls, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Glass Castle***

"It's impossible to read *A Place Called Home* and not want to redouble your efforts to fight the systems of poverty that have plagued America for far too long. In this book, David shares his deeply personal story and issues a rousing call to make this a more humane and compassionate nation." —**Hillary Rodham Clinton**

"This gut-wrenching and rousing memoir of a childhood lived on N.Y.C. streets sheds unforgiving light on America's own human-rights crisis—and dares us to do better." —**People**

"*A Place Called Home* is a vivid account of David Ambroz's harrowing childhood." —**NPR's "Morning Edition"**

"As the horrors of David's childhood unfold in his brilliant narrative -- his mother's battle with mental illness, bathing in public restrooms, stealing food, coping with abuse in foster homes -- his only salvation is the library. It's hard to sit still and not leap up to help solve societal problems after reading Ambroz's tale of bravery and resilience." —**Zibby Owens, "Good Morning America's '15 anticipated books for September"**

"Ambroz's harrowing book is a page-turner, chronicling how he and his siblings dumpster-dived for food, cycled through shelters and were coldly turned away by relatives as his mother struggled with mental illness and other issues. . . . And yet, Ambroz's must-read book offers hope—not just from his remarkable personal story of survival and triumph, but also from his common-sense suggestions for making change in America's foster care system." —**Palm Springs Desert Sun**

"Riveting. . . A haunting, inspiring chronicle of fortitude and perseverance." —**starred review, Kirkus Reviews**

"[A] captivating debut...Galvanizing and compassionate, this personal account of survival should be required reading." —**Publishers Weekly**

"*A Place Called Home* presents an unflinching, frank examination of the realities of being a child without a home and being surrounded by a fundamentally flawed system where neither child nor parent have enough help, or the right help, to break the cycle of poverty. Ambroz's story is a frightening example of how easily inadequate procedures and policies traumatize lives each and every day. The heart of this first memoir is both a raw account of Ambroz's journey to adulthood and a powerful, uncompromising call to action for significant change." —**Booklist**

"*A Place Called Home* asks us to reflect on the family we come from and the family we find, the extraordinary courage of a child and the responsibility we all have to make the world safer for those who enter our world unprotected. In a society far too often consumed by division and dissonance, Ambroz writes to us at just the right time, lighting the way for a better world by asking us to give every child a chance." —**Steve Pemberton, author of *A Chance in the World***

"I love a true story where the downtrodden triumph over hardship—and *A Place Called Home* delivers. David Ambroz, through grit, courage, and integrity, overcomes obstacles beyond my imagination. I found myself cheering for him and the siblings he steadfastly protects, wondering how they were going to survive. David does more than that—he thrives—and then he pays it forward. *A Place Called Home* is an awe inspiring story that will lift your spirits and soften even the hardest heart. It's a beautifully told, captivating memoir." —**David Crow, author of *The Pale-Faced Lie***

"From his roller coaster childhood being homeless on the streets of New York City to his boot strapped entry to the privileged halls of the Ivy League, I was thoroughly entertained and even provoked by David Ambroz's story. More so than any book I have read in recent times, this must read made me want to be better man." —**Dr. Alan Downs, author of *The Velvet Rage***

"A story destined to end in tragedy that magically rewards an indomitable determination to succeed. Beautifully written." —**Ted Koppel, veteran ABC anchor and New York Times bestselling author of *Lights Out***

"I was deeply moved by his memoir, *A Place Called Home*, a soulful and ultimately uplifting tale of turning experience into power. This book tells the truths we need to hear and is a must read for lovers of memoir and advocates alike; for those wondering what it is like to rise from poverty, and what an individual can do to fix the intractable problems we face." —**Mayor Eric Garcetti**

"A heartbreaking, gritty, and inspiring personal testament to the burden that is placed on a child in poverty. David's elegantly written memoir is an ode to the millions of families who are

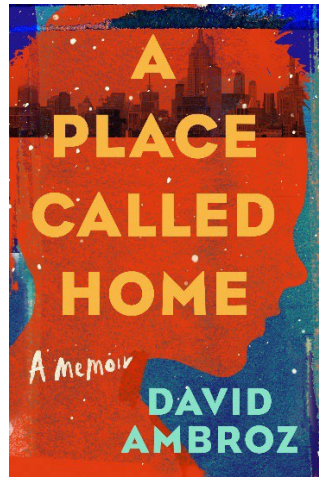
struggling to survive and provides the immense hope that is needed too.” —**Keith Ferrazzi, New York Times bestselling author of *Competing in the New World of Work***

“In *A Place Called Home*, Ambroz shares his personal journey out of a childhood marked by poverty, homelessness, and years in foster care—a story of courage, tenacity, and the power of education to transform lives.” —**Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy**

“David Ambroz faced seemingly insurmountable challenges his entire life and emerged with the grace and wisdom to tell the story. His dreams of a better life via education carried him through childhood abuse, homelessness, foster care, and finally to adulthood, where he leveraged his against all odds success to advocate for children living in poverty and foster care. This book is an inspiration to anyone who has encountered hardships, encouraging us to tackle them head on with courage and determination.” —**Madeline Di Nonno, President & CEO of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media**

“This memoir of his childhood and early adulthood, however, is more than just a story of how one boy found his way out of poverty and abuse, but rather a look at the interlocking systems of social and economic injustices that make success stories like his an exception rather than the rule.” —**Mombian**

TOUR DATES



A PLACE CALLED HOME

A MEMOIR

By David Ambroz

Saturday, October 29, 2022 Time: 3PM
eastern in-person

Venue: [Boston Book Festival \(Boston, MA\)](#)

Friday, November 11, 2022

Time: 2PM eastern in-person

Hosted by [Hudson River Housing, Inc.](#)

Venue: Villard Room and Parlors of Main Building at Vassar College, located at
124 Raymond Ave, Poughkeepsie, NY

Tuesday, November 15, 2022

Time: 12PM eastern virtual

[Abt Associates hosts a panel Creating Community Conditions so Children and Families Can Thrive](#)

Friday, November 18, 2022

Time: 6PM mountain in person

Venue: [Tattered Cover, McGregor Square location](#)

Additional dates may be added so please check <https://www.davidambroz.com/> if you're interested