

David Lubell and the Origins of the Welcoming America Initiative

David Lubell

David Lubell is the founder of **Welcoming America**, a national nonprofit organization focused on immigrant and refugee integration. He established Welcoming America in **2009**, following his work with the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) and Welcoming Tennessee.

Lubell previously worked as an advocacy and organizing director for Latino Memphis and later founded and directed TIRRC. While working in Tennessee, he helped develop **Welcoming Tennessee**, which became the model for the national organization.

Welcoming America subsequently expanded the concept nationally. In 2014, the organization partnered with the Obama administration's **White House Task Force on New Americans** on the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign. By 2016, that campaign had reached **50 cities**. In 2017, Welcoming America established the **Welcoming Standard** and **Certified Welcoming** as formal processes for communities seeking certification, with Dayton, Ohio becoming the first Certified Welcoming city.

His Jewish identity

Lubell has publicly identified himself as **Jewish American**. In a statement about his work, he connected his immigrant and refugee work directly to his Jewish heritage and to the Jewish teaching to “welcome the stranger.” The Charles Bronfman Prize, which recognized him in 2017, also identifies his Jewish background as an important part of his motivation.

The *Atlanta Jewish Times* reported that Lubell described his family's Jewish social-justice tradition as extending back generations. The article specifically identifies his great-grandfather, **Samuel Lubell**, as one of the founders of the Reconstructionist movement. Lubell also said, in discussing Jewish history and immigration, “**We’re immigrants. We’re refugees.**”

This establishes Lubell's publicly stated Jewish identity and his family's Jewish background. It does **not**, by itself, establish that his parents were immigrants or provide a complete genealogy of his family's immigration history.

Where was he born?

A reliable source establishing David Lubell's exact **city or place of birth** was not located in the sources reviewed.

What is documented is that he **grew up outside Philadelphia** in a family that emphasized social justice. He later attended Wesleyan University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history. He

subsequently received a Master of Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School and a certificate in nonprofit management from Georgetown University.

Therefore, it would be inaccurate to state a specific birthplace without additional genealogical or biographical documentation.

Was his family immigrant?

Lubell has publicly described his family's Jewish history in terms of immigration and refugee experience, and he has stated that his work is connected to that history. However, the sources reviewed do not establish a complete family immigration record showing exactly which immediate family members immigrated to the United States, from which countries, and during which years.

The documented reference to **Samuel Lubell**, Lubell's great-grandfather, provides a specific family connection to the earlier Jewish community, but additional genealogical records would be necessary to establish the family's immigration chronology.

Is David Lubell a Democrat?

I did **not** find reliable evidence establishing that David Lubell is a registered Democrat or that he has publicly identified himself as a member of the Democratic Party.

There are documented connections between his work and Democratic administrations. Most notably, Welcoming America partnered with the **Obama administration's White House Task Force on New Americans** in 2014. The organization also received recognition from the White House as part of its Champions of Change program. These institutional relationships demonstrate interaction with a Democratic administration, but they do not establish Lubell's personal party registration or political affiliation.

Likewise, his advocacy for immigrant and refugee integration describes the substance of his organization's work, but that should not automatically be treated as proof of his personal political-party membership.

Summary

The documented history is:

David Lubell → Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition → Welcoming Tennessee → Welcoming America (2009) → Building Welcoming Communities Campaign → Certified Welcoming (2017).

Lubell is publicly identified as **Jewish American**, and his Jewish heritage is explicitly connected to his explanation of why he became involved in immigrant and refugee work. His great-grandfather, Samuel Lubell, is identified as an important figure in the family's Jewish history.

The available reliable sources establish that Lubell **grew up outside Philadelphia**, but do not establish his exact birthplace. They also do not provide sufficient evidence to state that his parents were

immigrants or to provide a complete immigration history for his family. Finally, the sources reviewed do **not establish that Lubell is a Democrat.**