

FINDING BEN Continued from Front Page



Chef Courtney Lindsay with his father, Ben, and Lindsay’s two sons—three generations united by discovery, healing, and the evolving story of Black fatherhood.



Chef Courtney Lindsay with his wife, Chasitie, and their two sons.



Chef Courtney Lindsay with his father, Ben, whose reunion inspired the documentary *Finding Ben*.



Ben shares a laugh as his son, Chef Courtney Lindsay, and grandson look on.

At 40 years old, Chef Courtney Lindsay discovered something some people spend their entire lives searching for—the father he never knew. What followed wasn’t just a personal reunion; it became a cinematic love story reshaping conversations about Black fatherhood across Houston.

Finding Ben: A Father & Son’s Discovery chronicles Lindsay’s transformative journey from uncertainty to unconditional love, offering a counter-narrative to the harmful stereotypes that have long plagued Black fathers in America. The documentary, which premiered on Father’s Day 2025 at Fifth Ward’s DeLUXE Theater, returns for its final 2025 screening on December 19 at MATCH Theater.

“This Affects More People Than We Think”

Lindsay, co-owner of the beloved Mo’ Brunch + Brews and founder of Sauce Co. Foods, never intended to document his search for his biological father. The Lindsay family lived the experience first—present in every vulnerable, uncertain moment—before realizing they were holding something too sacred to keep to themselves.

“When you have such a beautiful love story, you know what I mean? You think of a love story as romantic love, but nobody really speaks of a love story between a son and a father—a father and son,” Lindsay explains. “In this day and age, to experience that love in totality, I was like, we have to tell this story because it was such a good, such a perfect, harmonious story that somebody else could be healed by this.”

He told the story first to friends, then to family members. Each time, the same thing happened—tears, questions, recognition. At every screening, people approach him carrying their own stories: fathers recently released from prison trying to rebuild relationships with adult children; people who’ve just found biological parents through DNA tests; individuals wrestling with whether to let absent fathers back into their lives.

“It affects more people than we think,” Lindsay says. “There are a lot of people out there with similar stories, especially Black people.”

A God Thing: Divine Timing and a Song Called Ben

Two weeks before Lindsay met his father, Ben, for the first time, his young son was rehearsing for a recital. The

song he’d been practicing—the melody filling their home day after day—was “Ben,” the Michael Jackson ballad. A name Lindsay didn’t yet know belonged to his father.

“It’s wild because we talk about... a God thing,” Lindsay reflects, still marveling at the architecture of it all. “We humans could not have written or designed a perfect script, a chain of events like this. We couldn’t have done it. It’s strictly God and us being faithful to God.”

That faithfulness runs through every frame of the documentary. Lindsay’s background in cinematography—studying radio and television production at Texas Southern University alongside his wife, Chasitie, and serving as a combat camera production specialist in the Army—allowed him to capture these moments with both technical excellence and emotional honesty.

Partnering with Kojo and Michelle of Octus House, the Lindsays crafted a film where the camera doesn’t just observe—it witnesses. It holds space for tears and laughter, for awkward silences and breakthrough moments, for the messy, miraculous work of becoming family.

Dismantling Stereotypes Through Vulnerability

In a city grappling with housing crises, food insecurity, and systemic inequities that disproportionately impact Black communities, *Finding Ben* arrives as necessary medicine. The documentary doesn’t offer easy answers. Instead, it sits in the complexity—in the difficult questions adult children face when absent parents return, and in the courage required to extend grace.

This is radical work. In a media landscape that too often portrays Black fathers through a deficit lens, *Finding Ben* dares to show something different. Not perfect. Not without pain. But present. Trying. Human.

“Some people are a little more forgiving than others, and some are a little more open than others,” Lindsay acknowledges. “The film is something to inspire hope... courage to take that first step or to walk toward a person or situation.”

The documentary challenges viewers to accept “who that person is as opposed to who you think or want them to be”—a lesson Lindsay himself had to learn by meeting his father where he was, not where he had imagined he’d be for 40 years.

Community as Co-Conspirator

Lindsay’s partnership with CoolxDad—the nonprofit founded by Kevin Barnett that amplifies positive narratives of Black fatherhood—extends the documentary’s impact beyond the screen. As a founding board member, Lindsay embodies the organization’s mission daily. When he found Ben, it became personal for Barnett, too.

“He’s one of my good friends, so he was one of the first people I called,” Lindsay recalls. “And he’s on the phone like, ‘Hey, stop, stop talking,’ because he’s getting emotional.”

Before Lindsay found Ben, the two had already shared “similar stories about fatherhood and the perspective of fatherhood.” So, Lindsay’s discovery felt like something deeper. “My finding my dad was like him finding a dad—another dad.”

CoolxDad will partner on the December 19 screening, with Barnett serving on the post-film panel. The collaboration reflects how Houston’s creative and community-building sectors are weaving together to heal generational trauma and write new stories about Black families.

The Mirror Effect

When Lindsay first met Ben, he encountered his own face looking back at him—20 years into the future. The same mannerisms. The same personality. The same way of moving through the world.

“I had a daddy out there. I’m looking like him, walking like him, talking like him. Just like, what the heck?” Lindsay laughs.

Beyond the physical resemblance, he found someone “so open, so vulnerable, and so in touch with his emotions and feelings.”

Ben hadn’t seen the final cut before the Father’s Day premiere. When the lights came up, he was crying—along with most of the audience. Now, he’s ready to be a grandfather, ready to step up in whatever way he can as a dad, embracing the sacred, everyday work of showing up.

From Sauce to Screen

Lindsay’s journey—from the kitchens of the women in his family, to pioneering Houston’s vegan cuisine movement, to documentary filmmaking—reflects the multidimensional nature of Black creative life. There’s a clear through-line: an understanding that nourishment comes in many forms, and that feeding people extends far beyond food.

After serving in the Army and attending The Art Institute of Houston, Lindsay and Chasitie launched Houston Sauce Co., multiple food trucks, and eventually Mo’ Brunch + Brews, introducing the city to bold, flavorful vegan cuisine. His appearances on Food Network’s *Alex vs. America* and *Chopped* brought national attention to Houston’s culinary innovation.

But *Finding Ben* reveals the man behind the chef’s whites—someone who understands that the most important ingredients are love, vulnerability, and the courage to show up, even when you don’t know what you’ll find.

A New Model for Black Storytelling

Finding Ben offers something rare in media representations of Black families—a story centered on healing rather than trauma, on love found rather than love lost, on fathers present rather than fathers absent. It is a deliberate act of resistance against dominant narratives that pathologize Black families while ignoring the systemic barriers that create family separation.

The documentary doesn’t erase the pain of growing up without a father. Finding Ben at 40 didn’t magically resolve decades of questions and longing. But it did open a door to a future neither man knew was possible. It whispered: *You are not forgotten. You are not too late. Love is patient—and sometimes it waits 40 years to arrive.*

“The film is something to inspire hope... for a future that could be, a relationship that could be,” Lindsay says. It’s about “faithfulness in God and another layer of hope, just to make sure that it could be something.”

For the growing number of people who’ve shared their stories with Lindsay after screenings—those navigating complex relationships with biological parents, those wondering if reconciliation is possible—*Finding Ben* serves as both a mirror and a map. It doesn’t prescribe answers, but it offers evidence that when vulnerability, grace, and open hearts meet, transformation is possible.

And sometimes, possibility is enough to take the first step.

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H-GAC is soliciting responses for the selection of qualified manufacturers, distributors, installers and service providers of Video Surveillance, Access Control & Security Fencing Systems and to make these types of products and services available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.

To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notice> or ESBID (txsmartbuy.com).

Response Deadline: January 29, 2026 @ 12:00 P.M. CT