

Bob Penton's Summary of Awards, Education, and Accomplishments

1. Founder of the Eastside Helping hand Cooperative Buyers Club in 1967: a program in the Tacoma housing project (Salishan) designed to provide fresh produce and staple food to low-income families. Two hundred families purchased food direct from farmers and wholesalers.
2. Founder of the Alpha House in 1980. One of the first Outpatient youth substance abuse programs in Tacoma. The program was used as a diversionary for Remann Hall, juvenile court of Pierce County.
3. Salishan community needs assessment: the outcome of the evaluation built the Eastside neighborhood center.
4. Acquired grants for the city of Tacoma to provide summer empowerment for Salishan youth. The youth built a beautification project along Swam Creek Park, a preserved natural park.
5. Organizer of Eastside Youth Mentorship in 1968: a youth program designed to encourage youth involvement in community service and government. One of the most accomplished youths is Joyce A Barr American diplomat and career foreign service officer in the Department of State. She served as an Assistant Secretary of State for Administration and Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer. Former Ambassador to Namibia, she also was the

International Affairs Advisor at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Alma mater PLU, Harvard University, and National Defense University

6. Founder of the first open fresh produce market in 1980 located in the Hilltop community.
7. Founded Agape Q Restaurant, a soul BQ restaurant in 1989 located in the Hilltop community.
8. Recipient of the Achievement Against the Odds Award in 1990. One of seven national recipients receives this award at the White House in Washington DC.
9. Founder of the Family Life Formation Ministry, designed to bring truth and reconciliation to hurting people.
10. Op-Ed writer for the Tacoma News Tribune from 2019-to 2020
11. Currently posting daily on Facebook "Thought for today." My future goal is to organize a weekly Podcast in addition to completing several books.
12. The Northwest Room of Tacoma's main Library has scheduled an oral interview of Bob Penton's life story on June 2022. This will be placed in the Archive of the northwest room

Educational achievement

The Evergreen State Colltoe, Olympia/ Tacoma 1974 BA degree

American Baptist Seminar: Berkeley CA 1978 MMA degree

Thursday, February 21, 2002

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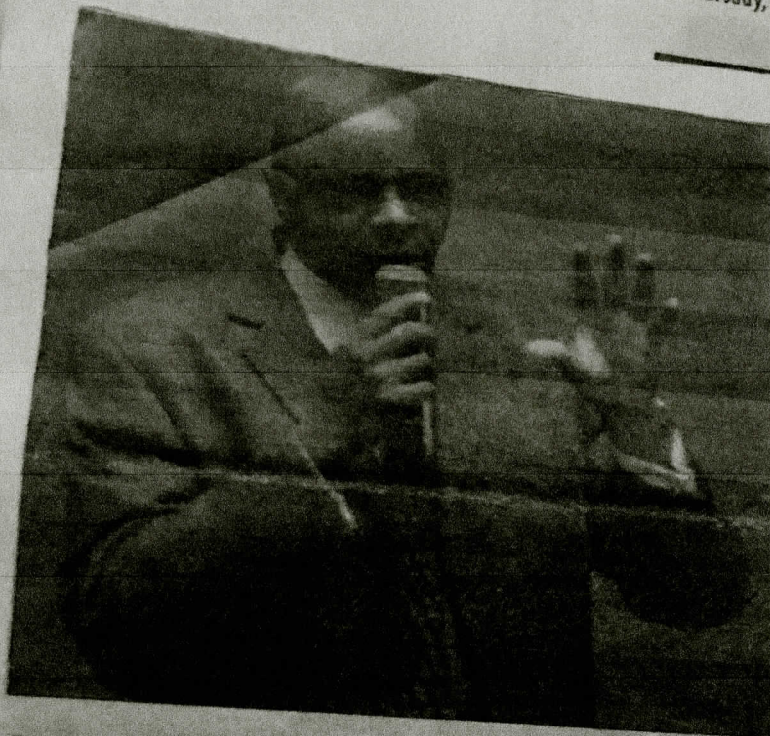


Photo by David Dick

Former Black Panther Robert Penton spoke Wednesday afternoon to an audience crowded around the Samuelson Union Building.

Ex-Black Panther speaks to students

By PAT MUIR
staff writer

ELLENSBURG — When Robert Penton was growing up in Louisiana, he learned from textbooks that were handed down from nearby white schools.

It was that sort of early experience that shaped the way Penton would come to view race relations in the 1960s when he joined the Black Panther Party in the San Francisco Bay area. Penton relayed this story and many others when he spoke to Central Washington University students

Wednesday in the Samuelson Union Building.

"I'm not talking about many years ago," he said, referring to segregation in restaurants and on buses. "But that was the era that led up to the Black Panther Party."

The Black Panthers are mostly remembered these days for their berets, leather jackets and shootouts with police, but that's not what the group was really about, Penton said.

"I was never personally involved in any of the

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PENTON

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shootouts, but there were many," he said. "Most of these shootouts you know about from your history books were instigated by the police. ... Never, not once, was any use of firearms instigated by the Black Panther Party."

While that was the most dramatic aspect of the Black Panthers, shooting it out with police was never part of the goal, he said. What most people forget or don't realize is that the group set up child-care services and provided food in black neighborhoods. The guns, Penton said, were for protection.

"We could not rely on the public institutions," he said. "There was no medical help. There was no police protection. For me to join the Black Panthers that was a way for me to control my own destiny."

Much has changed since the '60s, he said. For instance, Penton, the former radical, now works within the system as a diversity program manager for state Department of Social and Health Services.

"I never thought that I would be working for the government," he said. "I never thought I could be on

the struggle toward harmony and equality reached an end, he

"I think some of us are complacent," he said. "There's a lot we've already done. 'What more do we want,' I hear a lot of time."

What Penton wants to be color blind to see difference, he said. But instead of being fearful or hateful, he wants people to accept of differences.

"Ask yourself, whites are probably daily with their differences," he said. "You know, every day I live with it. ... Until I can reach that point, we have a lot to do."

Andrea VanHorn, a CWU sophomore, attended the event and agreed with Penton.

"I thought it was interesting hearing about the rights movement from an inside perspective of actual struggles from people who struggle with it," she said.

CWU freshman Vanessa France said she knew about the Black Panthers involved in humanitarian efforts, but was glad to hear of her fellow students' experiences.

Oral Interview for Northwest Room 6-1-22

Tell Your Story

Prompt #1

Name some places, people, or things you call “home?”

Born in Bogalusa La in 1947. I call this place home because of my humble beginning. My mother always rehearsed the story of my birth. I was born in a “Shotgun House,” a narrow house prevalent in African American communities in Louisiana. The name shotgun house derived its name from the architectural design. All the rooms are directly connected without hallways. It was sometimes said that a bullet or shotgun fired from the front door would pass through them without hitting anything and exit the back door, only if you are fortunate. Recently I read of more lofty reasons for their design.

According to my mother, I am the only child of seven siblings born in the home. It was the coldest time she remembered. It was midnight. My father had rushed out, searching for a public telephone to call the doctor. Remember, this was the pre-civil rights era. Bogalusa was known for having the highest ‘KKK’ per capita. My father risked his life to perform his fatherly duty. While gone,

baby Robert was born, landing on the floor with the gestation cord wrapped around his neck. My mother stated when she called the name Jesus I came forth. Miraculously, an older woman from the church showed up just in time, serving as a midwife cutting the umbilical. She became my godmother.

Later in high school, I became enchanted with segregation and systemic racism. For all black students, school textbooks were second-hand from the white schools. I remember gazing out the classroom window, thinking of faraway places. In the 11th grade, I joined the jobs corps and was sent to Cadillac, Michigan. In Job Corps, the trajectory of my life started to shift. No more “white only” signs or going into the back door of restaurants, or not allowed to use public facilities. I felt a new freedom. After returning from Job Corps, I was thumbing through a magazine when I resonated with a quote from JFK, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” I then had an epiphany and picked up a brochure regarding VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) Even today; I yet asked myself the question, why does a young black male living in abject poverty wish to answer such a quote especially when our nation was the hand of deprivation of Black

Americans. In answer to my question lies hope. This is the Segway that many young Black males will grapple with. I was bound for Los Angeles, Calif, South Central within two weeks. Upon arrival, I was surprised not to see overt signs that read white only, but the covert systemic racism was pervasive. I soon answered the call of the Black Power movement. The Black Panther party I strongly resonated with. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, I remember saying, "the greater part of my community was called good; what demon caused me to be so good for so long." This expressed how I felt about growing up in Louisiana. In Los Angeles, I am free to shout I am Black and I am proud. In Bogalusa, I was forced to say otherwise. After eighteen months in LA, I was assigned to Eastside in Tacoma, WA. In 1967 I introduced the Afro-hairstyle to the eastside (Salishan projects). Some of my most noticeable contributions took place in Salishan. See attachment.

Prompt #2: Who am I?

From Black Panther to Pink Panther

I say this because I went from an angry and aimless Black man to a purposeful, loving, and caring "hue-man."

This was the day I went to a Pastor name Rev. Al Davis Sr. I remember in a meeting on the Eastside; I was espousing the black panther and Malcolm X sentiments: By any means necessary. After the meeting, Rev Davis came to me with money in his hand and placed it in my hands. Later, I asked myself how he knew I needed that amount. A few days later, I scheduled a meeting with him. He answered my question about why he gifted me with money. He said it was the holy spirit that prompted him to do such. Then he shared his vision for the community. His vision resonated with me. I soon realized that I was being called into the ministry. We served together for more than thirty years through the Eastside community church. Many self-help endeavors were organized and promoted during our relationship. See attachment.

Prompts #3

What is your past, and what are your dreams?

Bob's quote: Poverty of purpose is worse than the poverty of purse. I believe many people live most of their lives seeking or not understanding their true purpose, unlike "The purpose-driven life" by Rick Warren, a best seller book. I believe it's a Purpose given Life. Each

human has been given their purpose at birth. My dream is to help young men, especially black men, their purpose. Objectives: assisting young black males in discovering their purpose, actualizing dreams, developing influential relationships, and teaching community engagement skills. I am currently doing one-to-one mentorship.

Clover Park Technical College Zoom Lecture

4-27-22

Lecturer: Bob Penton

Topic: **The seven Core Principles of Community Engagement**

I have worked and served in community services for more than five decades. Starting as far back as 1967, A VISTA volunteer or volunteers in service to America. I was earning approximately eleven cents an hour. One of the most rewarding phases of my career. I say that because it was shortly after high school, like most young blacks born in pre-civil rights. Disenchanted with the way things were in the South, such as systemic racism, poverty, and injustice. With passion, I yearned for a better quality of life. One day as I methodically read a magazine. I read a quote from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask- what you can do for your country." This was a life-changer; within two weeks, I joined VISTA. I was serving in Los Angeles, Calif, as a community organizer. **Why did I choose social work/ social service as a career? Two reasons: a desire to make a difference in the world and a passion for serving others. I believe this trait was given to me by my mother and grandmother; they were community matriarchs.** Below are some of the principles/ lessons I learned along the way.

First, define a community: people who may or may not be socially connected but share common interests, concerns, or identities. All communities are not the same. However, they are essential elements shared by all communities. It encompasses such as image, spirit, character, and pride. Effective communication and understanding of the language, culture, and nuances are critical.

Nuances: a subtle distinction or variation: the sensibility to awareness of or ability to express delicate shadings (as of meaning, feeling, or value).

Example: In an urban or African American community, you may hear the “N-word” frequently used by other African Americans. It’s used as a term of endearment. If used by a non-black person, it can set a firestorm.

The seven core principles of community engagement are,

1. Careful planning and preparation. This includes a needs assessment of the community you wish to service. You may research a recent evaluation. Do your homework.
2. Inclusion and Demographic Diversity: Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
3. Collaboration and shared purpose: support and encourage participation from all community sectors: Community leaders, government officials, faith-based leaders, educational institutions, healthcare institutions, etc.

4. Openness and Learning: Do not enter the community as a teacher but as a learner. Even if you hear of things you may have already mastered, be silent and let others boast about how much they know. When others discover what you know, it heightens your credibility and opens the door for lasting engagement. Remember, silence is not silent; it speaks volumes.
5. Transparency and Trust be transparent and open regarding methodology, timelines, resources, and commitments.
Answer the question, who? What? and when?
6. Follow-Up: Keep the community updated with all activities, i.e., accomplishments, etc.
7. Celebrate and Appreciate All involved: Bring the community together to showcase accomplishments and individuals for their service. Organize a community ethnic potluck. People love breaking bread together; in Greek, it's called Koinonia, Fellowship. Use social media to inform the public of your service and accomplishments.
8. For more information regarding the work and service of Bob Penton, you may google Bob Penton Tacoma Washington, Robert T. Penton's Facebook page, visit or go online to Northwest room at Tacoma Public Library, or email: robert.penton68@gmail.com