

Local Youth Speak Up

Two high school students tell Dan Rather "what it is"

On May 9, 1990 at Mt. Tahoma High School, Jeannie Bell and Charles Carson sat on a panel with local and national experts to discuss the drug and gang problem in Tacoma with Dan Rather of CBS.

The forum—a response to the unbalanced portrayal of Tacoma in an earlier 48 HOURS program—aired the following Saturday evening during prime-time on regional television.

Both students, members of the Safe Streets Youth Initiative, spoke passionately and articulately about "the problem", its roots and what we, as a community, need to do about it.

Following the forum, when asked to comment on the discussion, Lyle Quasim, remarked, "Clearly the centerpiece of the evening was the contributions of Jeannie and Charles. It was interesting to see Mr. Rather's jaw drop as he began to understand the depth, complexity and clarity of the statements made by these young people."

Lyle Quasim, Director of the Safe Streets Campaign, Rev. David Alger and Bob Womack were other local activists on the panel.

Profiles:

Jeannie Bell:

- graduate of Foss High School
- Youth Initiative member since 1988
- chair of Safe Streets Youth Initiative since inception
- currently attending Pierce College
- an outstanding and prolific organizer

Charles Carson:

- graduate of Oakland Alternative School
- graduate of Governors' School for Citizen Leadership
- Youth Initiative member since 1989
- former street kid, recovering cocaine addict
- recent recipient of the Hitachi Foundation's Yoshiyama Award for Exemplary Service to the Community. This award is given annually to five young people from across the United States and comes with a \$5,000 gift that Charles will use to attend college