

# United States less safe

By Rich Van Dellen

Coleen Rowley spoke in Rochester on Sept. 16 and 17. Rowley is a nationally known speaker, author and outspoken advocate for peace. She wore a button "End War" and on the top of her shoes was the peace symbol.

Rowley had a long career with the FBI, retiring at the end of 2004. She was here to give the keynote address at the Pax Christi Minnesota State Assembly that met on Sept. 17. (Pax Christi is a Catholic peace and justice movement.) Rowley gave a talk the night before open to the public.

Unfortunately, media coverage was minimal. The Post-Bulletin did not cover her talks or the Pax Christi assembly. KAAL-TV interviewed her, but there was no other media coverage that I am aware of.

The Post-Bulletin did have a short article announcing her talks and the Pax Christi event under the headline of "Whistleblower to give talk." What Rowley did was tell the truth to the authorities at the FBI — speaking truth to power. She sent a memo in May of 2002 bringing to light intelligence lapses prior to the attacks on 9/11/2001 and also pointing out endemic problems in the FBI and the intelligence community. She was on the cover of Time magazine with two other "whistleblowers" as women of the year. She was highly criticized for her attempt to warn the FBI director and other officials about the dangers of launching the Iraq war.

Rowley spoke on ethical decision making. She stated in her talks that government secrecy harms public safety. She has just written an article entitled "Secrecy kills" Some of the other topics covered in her talks are found in that article. She referred to the studies of Robert Pape in his book "Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide." Pape studied suicide attacks from 1980 to 2004 and discovered that the motivation for most suicide bombers was not religious but anger over foreign troops on their homeland. The United States has more than 800 military bases on foreign soil in more than 100 countries.

Rowley talked of "blowback" a CIA term indicating actions of the United States that might result in retaliation. The 9/11 attacks are an example. Rowley emphasized we are not safer since starting the war on terror, stating worldwide terrorism has increased



Van Dellen

since 2001. I encourage everyone concerned with our safety to read her article.

The Pax Christi assembly offered six workshops, running simultaneously and repeated once. Kay Anderson of Rochester talked of her trips to Haiti. Eve and Adam Judy, also of Rochester, presented information on human trafficking.

I attended Chante Wolf's workshop on Sexual Violence in the Military. She spent 12 years in the U.S. Air Force and is now a Vet for Peace. Rape and demeaning treatment of women is common in the military — an alarming and discouraging picture backed up by her personal experience, facts and articles.

Steve Clemens, in the other workshop I attended, reviewed his trip to Afghanistan in the spring of this year. A group of 24 peace activists organized by Kathy Kelly and the Center for Creative Nonviolence traveled to Afghanistan to support the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers.

They held a peace walk in Kabul on March 18; a candlelight vigil on March 19 to remember children killed in the wars; and then planted 55 trees to symbolize peace. The youth all wore sky blue colors, the women sky blue headscarves and the men blue scarves. The color was deliberately chosen to indicate that we all live under the same blue sky and have that common connection.

The mission statement of the youth group is: "We seek to encourage wide-scale, person-to-person relationships towards peace and reconciliation, with a resolute commitment to non-violence, non-killing and the well-being of ALL people."

After the tree planting event one of the youth wrote a poem ending with the lines:

*"War is NOT what we wish to plant on any day, & certainly not today.*

*We wish to plant a tree rooted in Love, a Love which says, 'I live and love, so I shall not kill'.*

*If we wish to live without wars, we need to plant a different tree."*

These are courageous young people.

After Rowley's talk we read together an article by Joe Mayer of Rochester "How can we be silent?"

*Rich Van Dellen of Rochester is a retired physician and a peace advocate. He wrote this on Sept. 21, the United Nations International Day of Peace.*

 **PostBulletin.com**  
for related weblinks

**“The motivation for most suicide bombers was not religious but anger over foreign troops in their homeland.**

**TOMORROW** Local columnist explains why she believes new