

# Jodi Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines 1997

*"for their work for the banning and clearing of anti-personnel mines"*



As a citizen living comfortably inside the United States, you have probably felt powerless at one time or another to truly impact any of the life-threatening global issues facing millions of people worldwide – earthquakes, disease, abuse, poverty, violence – the list of issues we wish we could make better is quite long. For inspiration, look no further than Vermonter Jody Williams, a woman who grew up in middle-class America, yet managed to save the lives of thousands of people living in present and former war-zones like Nicaragua and Cambodia.

She has been described as tough, determined, and fearless.

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Williams first act as a change in the standing up for schizophrenic saw then that to mean people because they

Jody is fluent in on issues America right she met limbs to on to earn a international

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- When Bill Clinton refused to sign the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997, Williams called him a “weenie”
- About 80 countries in the world have landmines in them today
- Landmines have been used since the Civil War
- An estimated 1,000-2,000 people die from landmines each month
- Cost to manufacture a landmine: \$3-\$75
- Cost to clear a landmine: \$300-\$1,000

*“Emotion without action is irrelevant.”*

was born in 1950 in Vermont. Her first teaching English as a Language in Mexico, Kingdom, and D.C.

realized that she could powerful agent for world at a young age, her deaf and brother in school. She she wanted to stand up who bullied others just were weak.

Spanish and worked affecting Central after college where children who had lost landmines. She went Master’s degree in affairs. One day in

1981, someone asked Williams if she thought it was possible to create a growing global awareness of landmines into a nongovernmental organization that would work politically to get rid of landmines. She thought it was possible. A decade later, in 1991, she started the International Campaign to Ban Landmines: the ICBL.

She liked that the issue was narrow enough to focus on, yet could be used as an issue through which to talk about the larger issue of war and methods of warfare.

For Jody, the biggest challenge was convincing all of the governments of the world that banning landmines wasn't just some utopian idea that would never really happen. She kept going because she believed what she was doing was truly right. Jody knew that getting rid of a weapon that indiscriminately victimizes children, women, and men alike would make the world a better place to live in. Despite her success at 121 countries sign the Mine Ban Treaty, her home country United States refused to sign. She once publicly called Bill Clinton a "weenie" for refusing to sign.

Jody is still working on the landmine issue because the Mine Ban Treaty is just the legal foundation, the first step – she does not consider her work complete until all the countries that have signed it have complied and all landmines are destroyed. She remains down-to-earth and still lives in a modest two-story home in Vermont, where she loves to walk around barefoot.

#### About the International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Landmines are different from other conventional weapons. When a war is over, the landmines stay in the ground and continue to kill — for decades. Guns go home with the soldiers, but landmines are designed to kill — mindlessly, out of control, for years. And obviously, if a war has been over for years, the people the landmines are killing are all innocent civilians. Even during wars, landmines cannot tell the difference between a soldier and a civilian. They are indiscriminate — and that is one of the reasons we believed they were already illegal weapons under international law.

The ICBL, launched in 1992, was the first organization in the world that was able to effectively ban any type of warfare. They did so over an extremely short period of 6 years and many hope that the model the ICBL used to create its success can be used in the future. It is a loose organization of NGOs that function towards the same goal, however each NGO retains power over how they can best achieve their goal. The organization used fax, email, and telephone correspondence heavily in order to keep in contact with each separate NGO. The ICBL worked closely with governments that had said they were pro-ban, built trust, and held several conferences to work out how a treaty might be written. In 1997, 121 countries signed the Mine Ban Treaty in Ottawa, Canada. To date, over 135 have signed it. The ICBL is working with those governments to ratify and to implement the terms set out in the ban.

### **Suggested Classroom Activities**

#### **Introduction/Warm-Up:**

React to one of the following Jody Williams quotes:

“The rest of the world did not go away because New York was attacked. There are many, many problems in the world we need to address, not just that one.”

“Emotion without action is irrelevant.”

Have you ever traveled outside the United States? If so, in what ways did it affect you? If not, what would you like to see? How do you think going there might change your view of the world?

Do you think citizens from the United States can really affect the lives of people living in developing countries? Why or why not?

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Jody get involved in the issue of landmines? (Level 1)
2. Why are landmines such a difficult problem? (Level 1)
3. What makes Jody Williams different from other regular people who live in the United States? How was she able to overcome that feeling of powerlessness? (Level 2)
4. Why do you think Bill Clinton may have refused to sign the treaty? (Level 3)
5. What kinds of global issues do you think need heroes like Jody Williams? What can be done about those issues? (Level 3)

#### **Vocabulary :**

1. nongovernmental organization
2. indiscriminate
3. civilians
4. landmines
5. utopian

## 6. ICBL

### **Activities:**

Adopt a Mine Field as a class or school at <http://www.landmines.org/>

Send the written letters of the class

### **Technology Option:**

Research countries and conflicts that have the most difficulty with landmines today (example: Afghanistan)

### **Resources:**

#### [Adopt-a-Minefield](#)

[www.landmines.org](http://www.landmines.org)

Coordinated by the U.N. Association of the USA, the U.N. Development Programme, and the Better World Fund, Adopt-a-Minefield raises funds for mine clearance operations. Every dollar raised is forwarded to the United Nations. The website is a great source of information on landmine history, current solutions, major players in the anti-landmine campaign, and it offers curriculum units for grade school through high school.

#### [Clear Landmines](#)

[www.clearlandmines.com](http://www.clearlandmines.com)

Visitors to the Clear Landmines website can make free donations (once a day) to the effort to eradicate landmines by the "click of a button." The funds are administered and distributed by the Canadian Landmine Foundation, and the site also has free banner ads you can place on your site.

Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

<http://www.unicef.org/graca/>

International Campaign to Ban Landmines official website

[www.icbl.org](http://www.icbl.org)