

Jody Williams and the Campaign to Ban Landmines

1997

We are moving in the right direction. It does not mean we don't have great challenges before us."



Jody Williams was born in 1950 in Putney, Vermont in a middle class family. Her first career was teaching English as a Second Language in Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Washington, D.C.

Although she grew up in a home like many others of her generation, her life has been **extraordinary**. She saved the lives of thousands of people living in war-zones like Nicaragua and Cambodia.

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

Williams first understood that she could help change the world at a young age. She saw her deaf and schizophrenic brother being teased in school and defended him from bullies. She wanted to stand up to mean people who were mean to others just because they were different or weak.

Jody speaks Spanish as a second language. She worked on issues affecting Central America. After college she met children who had lost arms and legs to **landmines**. One day in 1981, someone asked Williams if she thought it was possible to teach the world the dangers of landmines and how to get rid of them. She thought it was possible.

Ten years later, in 1991, she started the **International Campaign to Ban Landmines**: the ICBL.

She thought that this issue was a way to talk about the violence of war and methods of fighting wars.

For Jody, the biggest challenge was convincing all of the governments of the world that banning landmines wasn't just some good idea that would never really happen. She kept working on this because she believed what she was doing was truly right. Jody knew that getting rid of a weapon that harmed children, women, and men would make the world a better place to live. Despite her success getting 121 countries

- **When President Bill Clinton refused to sign the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997, Williams called him a “weenie”**

- **Landmines have been used since the Civil War**

- **An estimated 1,000-2,000 people die from landmines each month**

- **The cost to manufacture a landmine: is \$3-\$75. The cost to clear a landmine: \$300-\$1,000**

sign the Mine Ban Treaty, her home country United States refused to sign. She once publicly called President Bill Clinton a “weenie” for refusing to sign.

Jody is still working on the landmine issue. The Mine Ban Treaty is the first step to her goal. She does not consider her work complete until all the countries that have signed it have **complied** and all landmines are destroyed.

Today she lives in a small two-story home in Vermont as she continues her Nobel Peace Prize winning work.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Landmines are different from other conventional weapons. Countries at war bury landmines in the ground so that when a soldier steps on the mine it will explode and kill or severely injure him. When a war is over, the landmines stay in the ground and continue to kill the people who accidentally step on them. These people may be trying to farm a field, play in the field, or just walk through it. Guns go home with the soldiers, but landmines stay in place for years. When a war is over the landmines are killing civilians. Even during wars landmines cannot tell the difference between a soldier and a civilian. They are **indiscriminate**. This is one of the reasons Jody Williams 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 hoped that the model the ICBL used to create its success would be used in the future. It is a voluntary organization of NGOs that function towards the same goal. 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.

About 80 countries in the world have landmines in them today.

“Emotion without action is irrelevant.” - Jody Williams

Suggested Classroom Activities

Jody Williams

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. on 9/11) . 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)
 - a. Do you think our current President would sign this treaty? Why/why not? (Level 2)
5. What kinds of global issues do you think need heroes like Jody Williams? What can be done about those issues? (Level 3)

Vocabulary Terms:

1. **nongovernmental organization (NGO)**
2. **indiscriminate**
3. **civilians**
4. **landmines**
5. **ICBL**
6. **indeterminate**
7. **extraordinary**

Activities:

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

Write letters explaining your feelings about landmines. Send the letters to your Representative.

Princess Diana of England also strongly opposed Land Mines. Research what she did to educate people about their dangers. Do you think Jody Williams agreed with her?

Take a poll in your school to see if students know about land mines. Create posters to educate them about what they are and how children are affected by them.

Technology Option:

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

Resources:

[Adopt-a-Minefield](#)

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

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