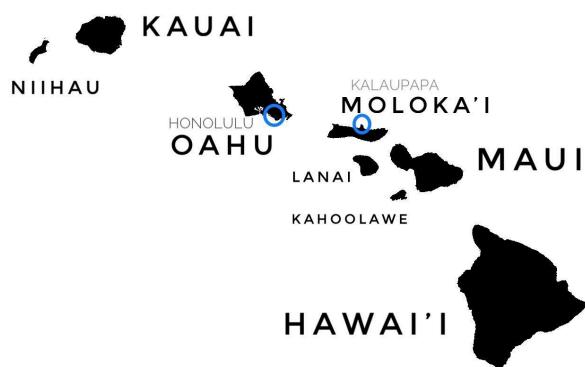


Moloka'i: The Story of Father Damien. Movie Discussion Guide

Locations

Kalaupapa: small inaccessible part of island, a peninsula with high *pali* (cliffs).

Honolulu: the modern capital city of the sovereign Kingdom of Hawaii.



Characters

Father Damien: missionary from Belgium called to serve lepers. Broke rules to show love.

Rudolf Meyer: commissioner, supply agent. (Lives topside: walk or ride on a steep path up the cliff face)

Father Leonor: assisted kind Bishop Kockerman and later Bishop Maigret. Didn't want to help Father Damien and claimed that he exaggerated.

Clayton Strawn: new manager of rations. Unethical, but repented later after he went blind.

William Williamson: British Protestant medical assistant who contracted leprosy from patients.

Prime Minister Gibson: served the Hawaiian government under King Kalakaua. angry about the finances of Molokai.

Dr. Kaleewis: brought experimental medicine. Couldn't commit to stay

Princess Lili'uokalani: visited lepers, wrote Aloha Oe which she sings in this movie

Mother Marianne: worked at New York hospital, called to Hawaii. Worked at Kalaupapa until she died at age 80. None of her nuns were ever infected (they focused on cleanliness).

Historical Events

1778: Captain Cook and Western world come to Hawaii, bringing many diseases. More than half of the native population dies in the following decades.

1830s: first suspected cases of leprosy in Hawaii. Christianity has become the main religion of Hawaiians.

1866: leper colony established by King Kamehameha V.

1873: mission begins, Damien is 33.

1877: Princess Lili'uokalani visits Kalaupapa

1883: Mother Marianne and six nuns travel to Honolulu

1884: Father Damien contracts leprosy

1888: nuns allowed to come to Molokai

1889: Father Damien dies, age 49

1940: a cure is developed

1969: isolation law repealed

2009: Damien sainted

Medical notes on Hansen's Disease (Leprosy):

caused by bacteria, damages skin, nerves, and eyes. Patients get rashes and lose feeling in their extremities. Lose fingers, toes, noses, ears, or more. Blindness, damaged skin

Misunderstanding: Contagiousness is actually very low, and not everyone is vulnerable to it.

Spread by coughing and mucus, but historically, people thought, don't touch and don't share food. Not an STI.

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Emotional: forgotten by family, children raised by strangers, prison-like. Judged for their poverty, unclean, untrustworthy, and morally corrupt. Spreads more in poor areas, still exists in poor countries today. In leper colonies, “Boredom is the worst punishment”

Hawaii banished more than 8,000 lepers to Molokai over the years. Around 1,000 on island at a time during Damien's service years

Biblical references: Leviticus 14:54–57: A wide range of skin conditions were called leprosy in ancient times. Jesus heals lepers in Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16.

Catholicism

Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist (communion), Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony (Marriage), and Holy Orders (becoming a priest or nun.).

Last Rites is a ritual performed for the dying.

Confession: telling sins to a priest, then he gives you absolution (forgiveness.)

Saints: The Catholic church designates some people as saints, in honor of their work on earth, and identified by miracles after their death.

Vows: Priests and nuns take vows of celibacy (lifelong abstinence from sex) and poverty. If they break the rules, they can be unfrocked (authority removed, special clothes taken.) In this story, we meet a Brother who has taken a vow of Penitence. He has committed a sin, and part of his remorse includes some challenge or manual labor to make up for the harm he caused.

No divorce and remarriage: without special permission. (another rule Father Damien breaks)

Protestants: Christians who aren't Catholic. Protestants protested corruption in the church in the 1500s. They broke off to become a new group, which splintered into many groups, called

Protestant Denominations: Lutherans, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and more. Many Christians today called themselves “non-denominational.”

Cultural Notes

Mourning in Polynesian cultures is loud, public, and communal.

Hiding a leper was a crime: you were arrested, possibly sent away without saying bye. However, there were times on Molokai where family members could choose to come along as helpers.

Discussion Questions

Malulani tells Father Damien she's entitled to the good life when he finds her at the mad house, where lepers drink and party. Damien disagrees on what a good life entails. What is The Good Life?

Lepers struggled not just due to illness, but how they were treated by their society. Some people believe that those who are sick or poor must be getting what they deserve. Where do we see this in our world today? What is God's heart for the sick and poor?

Father Damien did so much work alone. Sometimes he got state support and sometimes church support. Who should fix the problems of the world? Church? State? Individuals?