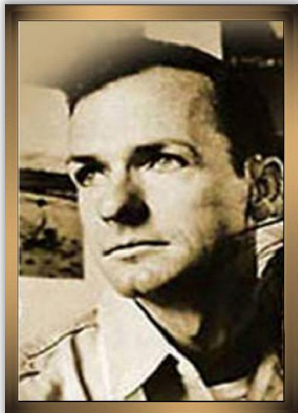


DR. THOMAS DOOLEY

Gay Physician and Philanthropist
(1927 - 1961)



As a navy doctor, Dooley supervised a medical assistance program for more than 600,000 refugees fleeing from North Vietnam to the south in 1954; he later established a network of hospitals and clinics in Southeast Asia to serve the rural poor. Dooley — who was considered America’s answer to renowned humanitarian Albert Schweitzer — was named the seventh most-admired man in the U.S. in a 1959 Gallup poll. That same year, following an anonymous tip, the Navy launched an elaborate six-week investigation — that included wire-tapping private phones and monitoring his personal contacts — which resulted in Lieutenant Dr. Tom Dooley being forced to resign from the military for being gay. In spite of this, Dooley was hailed as an inspirational example of one man’s commitment to a greater cause when President John F. Kennedy launched the Peace Corps. Dooley was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1961. A statue dedicated in his honor stands at the University of Notre Dame.

Lesson Plan

Level 1: Contributions Approach

1. Activate Prior Experience: Have you heard of Dr. Thomas Dooley before? Read the biographical information at <https://legacyprojectchicago.org/person/thomas-dooley>.
2. Group Discussion: At Dooley’s funeral, Sen. Stuart Symington called him “one of those rare Americans who is truly a citizen of the world.” Discuss what you think it means to be a citizen of the world.
3. Extend Knowledge: See photos of Dooley and learn more about his work through his hometown newspaper: https://www.stltoday.com/news/archives/a-look-back-the-jungle-doctor-tom-dooley-succumbs-to-cancer-in-1961/article_bec381d7-2c9c-5875-a6e1-8d7776342afd.html

Level 2: Additive Approach

1. Where is Vietnam? Find the country on a world map; then read about its history and culture at <https://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam>
2. What do you know about the Vietnam War? Watch this 25-minute video summary of the conflict: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tNTh6KlXXU>. What did you learn that you did not know before?
3. Read about other [LGBTQ+ medical professionals honored by the Legacy Project](#), including Margaret Chung, Alan L. Hart, James Miranda Barry, and Tom Waddell. What similarities can you find in their work? Their motivations? Their values?
4. Dr. Thomas Dooley was forced out of the US Navy because he was gay. In the 1950s, more than 5,000 LGBTQ+ Americans in the government and military faced the same persecution, a tragic period known today as “The Lavender Scare”. Legacy Project inductee Frank Kameny was also a victim of the Lavender Scare: <https://legacyprojectchicago.org/person/frank-kameny> Research Kameny’s life and write an essay about how he turned his dismissal into many victories for the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement.

Level 3: Transformational Approach

1. President John F. Kennedy credited Dooley for inspiring the founding of the US Peace Corps. www.peacecorps.gov Can you imagine serving for two years as a volunteer in another country? Where would you want to go, and what would you want to do there to help?
2. Dr. Thomas Dooley is criticized by many people today for encouraging US involvement in Southeast Asia, which led to America’s entry into the Vietnam War. Have you ever admired someone from history about whom you later learned something that disappointed you or made them controversial? How did this information make you feel? Would you still defend them?
3. LGBT Americans like Dr. Dooley were not allowed to serve openly in the US armed forces until 2011, when President Barack Obama signed the repeal passed by Congress. The Trump Administration restored that portion of the policy pertaining Transgender service members. As of 2020, soldiers who are Transgender still cannot serve. Follow their ongoing struggle to change this policy through the Transgender American Veterans Association. <http://transveteran.org/> How do YOU feel about Transgender people being allowed to serve their country? Why?

Level 4: Social Action Approach

1. Dr. Dooley assisted refugees who had fled North Vietnam in the 1950s. Where are refugees fleeing from today, and why? Learn more through the International Rescue Committee: www.rescue.org. As a citizen of the world, what can you do to help those refugees?
2. Other LGBTQ+ Americans have made “Most Admired” lists or won high-profile awards, including Legacy Project inductees Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt. Make your own list of the five people you most admire. Explain why you selected each individual?