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thought it would make a nice conclusion to the film.

"At first the jail said, 'Yes,'" Fishman said.

The detainees, however, were under the control of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Her request went to federal authorities, and ICE said no.

That meant Fishman had to scramble to come up with another solution. Solid footage is key to any movie, and Fishman, who had left a career as an architect and urban planner to pursue filmmaking, knew she had to work with what was available. To create closure to Persch and Murphy's story, Fishman and her editor used voice-overs and still photography.

The closing and opening moments of a film usually display credits, and Fishman credited a famous gathering of men as the catalyst for nuns' renewed passion in social justice. That gathering was composed of Catholic leaders and it was called Vatican II.

Out of the habit, into the streets

Known officially as the Second Vatican Council, Vatican II was an all-male conclave that brought Catholic bishops to Saint Peter's Basilica once a year between 1962 and 1965. The objective was to consider the role of the Catholic Church in a modern world facing social, political and economic changes.

One of the outcomes of the council was that women's congregations were encouraged to reexamine the beliefs of their founders, Fishman said. From these original sources, nuns could find inspiration for renewal.

Fishman said that many sisters took the call to heart, and nuns chose to live like the people they served. And dress like them.

"That's what spurred them to stop wearing their habits," Fishman said.

Vatican II also caused nuns to renew their commitments to serve poor and low-income people. From that point forward, nuns jumped feet-first into the social justice movement. "Band of Sisters" shows footage of nuns, some in habits and some without, carrying picket signs in Civil Rights protests, marching for health care or fighting for the rights of detainees.

Every five years or so, nuns choose a new issue of focus, Fishman said. Recently, sisters have begun work to end human trafficking, which is one more issue she believes puts them in the vanguard of social justice.

"If you want to find out where we're headed, just pay attention to the nuns," she said.

Beginning in 2009, the Vatican did just that, specifically placing U.S. nuns under investigation.

The sisters knew their actions were being investigated, but were still surprised by the assessment of their actions released last April.

That's when the Vatican denounced the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), which represents 80 percent of the country's 57,000 Catholic nuns, for spending too little time promoting Catholic teachings

such as the prohibition of women priests and denouncing gay and lesbian relationships. The Vatican also accused LCWR of promoting "radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith."

The accusations alarmed and upset many nuns, Sister Lillian Murphy said, but it didn't diminish sisters' commitment to those they serve.

"They want to be able to control us, but they can't," Murphy said. "We won't let them."

Murphy said instead of meeting the Vatican's words with anger, LCWR has entered into dialogue with church leaders and expressed the nuns' passion for social justice. The Vatican's statements and the nuns' response generated headlines last year. Last month, 60 Minutes aired a segment about the roil in the church entitled "American nuns struggle with Vatican for change."

While this struggle is not the focus of "Band of Sisters," it could draw viewers to the film. Fishman said when viewers,

particularly younger ones, sit down in the theater, they can draw inspiration from seeing older women fighting for the rights of all people.

"When they see these 70-year-old women going out there and making a difference," Fishman said, "it can be motivating."

One motivating personality will be Murphy, who, playing coy, won't reveal her actual age. "In my seventies," she said, with a chuckle. "But I don't feel that old."

Age is largely a nonissue for her and other sisters, she said. The driving force for many Catholic nuns is to stay committed to social justice. Helping people acquire affordable housing, health care and pastoral rights in jail are just some of the ways sisters express their passion to a higher calling, Murphy said. "It's truly the work of God."

For information about the film, visit bandofsistersmovie.com. Reprinted from *Real Change News*, Seattle, Wash.

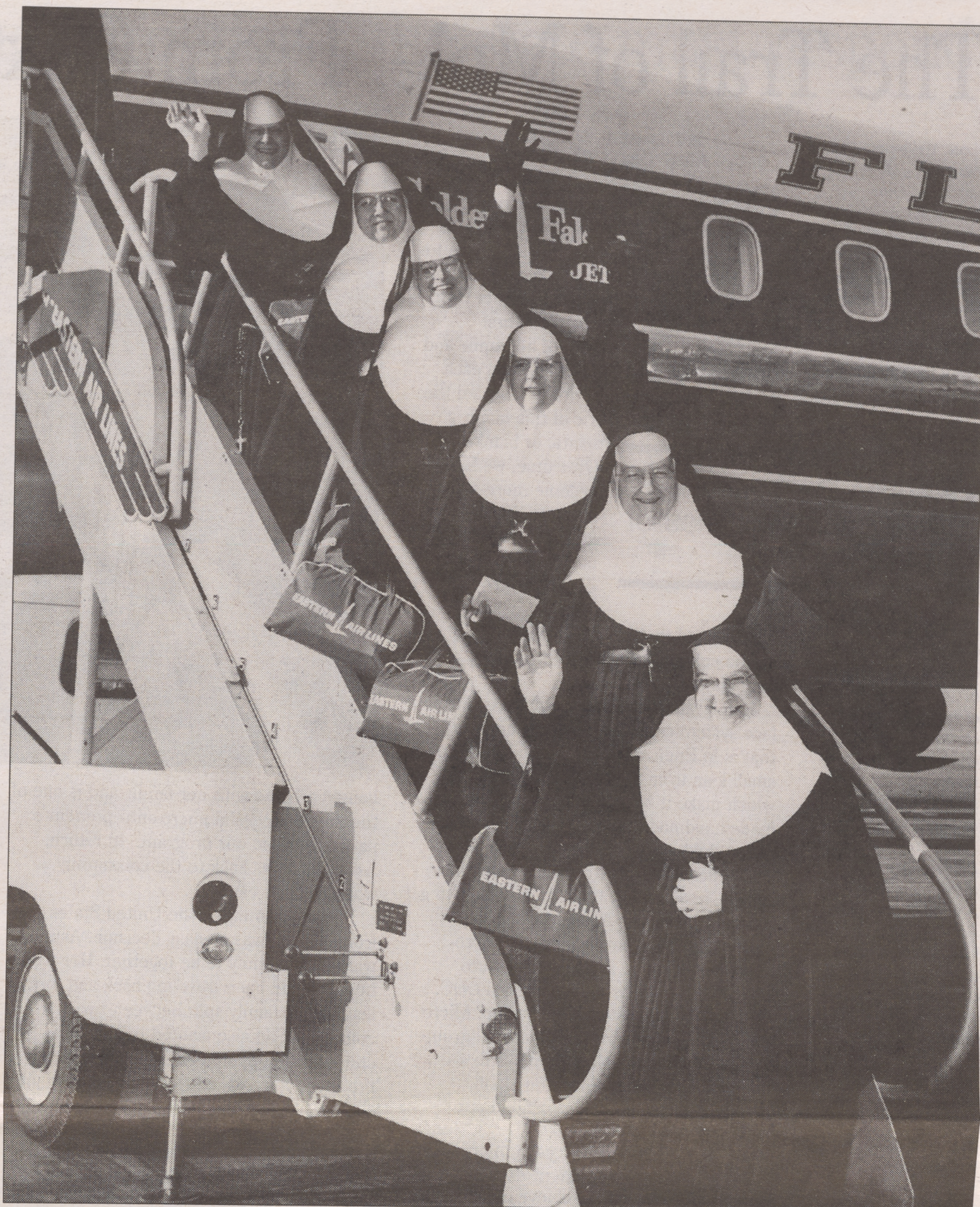


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SISTERS OF MERCY
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In 1961, a sextet of Sisters of Mercy prepare to begin missionary work in Peru.

Untitled #503

By Ben Zarov

I am writing diamonds in my basement,
Vulgar amoral things.
I am abusing words with a sadist streak,
Skewing songs of myself with a Buddhist screech,
Meditating on the bigger pictures and shredding petty scriptures.
I am splitting hairs in a thousand pictures (that's a million words).
I am lingering on the tasteless,
Mingling in the dankest basements,
& displaying heroic patience
in silly alliterations.

One More

By Paula Ramirez

One more poem to show my support,
Finally a positive answer from
The Supreme Court.

Hold each other and dance in
Glee.

Expressing your love is finally
Free.