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## A VISIONARY VERTIGO – BRAZIL: NEVER AGAIN

In **A Visionary Vertigo – Brazil: Never Again**, the Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo presents the **Brasil: Nunca Mais** (Brazil: Never Again) project to the public, the most comprehensive research ever conducted on torture during the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964-1985). Curated by researcher and professor Diego Matos, the exhibition revives the memory of this initiative, which clandestinely copied and organized information from 707 court cases against political prisoners from the Superior Military Court (STM), creating an unprecedented and irrefutable study of the extent of crimes committed by the Brazilian state during that period.

Today, the BNM project's collection is available for consultation at the Edgard Leuenroth Archive (AEL) at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), as well as digitally on the 'BNM – Brasil: Nunca Mais Digit@l' and 'Armazém Memória' portals. The findings of this impactful work were compiled in a book of the same name, published in 1985, which remained on Brazil's best-seller list for 91 consecutive weeks. Presenting it at the Memorial da Resistência nearly forty years later honors the tireless efforts of those who risked everything to expose the truth about the grave human rights violations committed by the dictatorship.

Supported by the World Council of Churches and the Archdiocese of São Paulo, the initiative involved emblematic figures such as Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns (1921-2016), Archbishop of São Paulo, and Presbyterian pastor Jaime Wright (1927-1999). It also relied on a network of lawyers, activists, journalists, and civil society members who, for years, remained anonymous for daring to challenge censorship and political repression. The testimonies of some of these individuals featured in the exhibition are part of the Memorial da Resistência's Regular Testimony Collection Program, contributing significantly to preserving the memory of the project.

A central element of the curatorial approach is the visual treatment given to the reports, diagrams, and quantitative analyses produced by the project, presented here in dialogue with the Alípio Freire Collection, also part of the museum's archive. This collection includes works created by former political prisoners Alípio Freire, Artur Scavone, Ângela Rocha, Rita Sipahi, Carlos Takaoka, José Wilson, Manoel Cyrillo, Sérgio Ferro, and Sérgio Sister during their time in various prisons in São Paulo during the dictatorship, alongside artworks by Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, Carlos Zilio, Carmela Gross, Cildo Meireles, Claudio Tozzi, Rafael Pagatini, Regina Silveira, Rivane Neuenschwander, and Rubens Gerchman, kindly lent by the Pinacoteca of São Paulo and the artists themselves. Together, these works challenge our understanding of the memory of the dictatorship.

A milestone in the fight for justice, **Brasil: Nunca Mais** project shares the Memorial da Resistência's ongoing commitment to preserving and valuing history as a foundation for building a future in which human rights are fully respected. May its legacy be better known by future generations and continue to inspire Brazilian society in the broad fight against torture, both past and present.

**Ana Pato**

Technical Director

Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo



## A VISIONARY VERTIGO – BRAZIL: NEVER AGAIN

*I see a clear path for Brazil,  
Despite the pain  
A visionary vertigo that needs no follower  
Naked with my music, beyond that, only love  
I glimpse certain things from where I stand  
– Caetano Veloso*

“Great courage is being able to say yes.” With this verse, Caetano Veloso ended one of his songs that best reflects the narrative of a “road movie” — a saga or adventure that is simultaneously personal and political. The song’s name is ‘Nu com a minha música’ (Naked with My Music), which slowly recounts the artist’s solitude during his extensive tours across Brazil in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a distance traversed slowly. It mirrors the mood of Brazil’s supposedly gradual and painless political transition.

Despite an evident sense of anguish in the song, there is a contrasting theme of resilience and hope for the future — something that should neither be erased nor repressed. It evokes a path (as suggested by the lyrics themselves) or a light at the end of the tunnel, a path to be followed. It is a fearless pursuit that cannot be lost, even when faced with obstacles or uncertainty. But what connection can we draw between this theme and the central message of this exhibition project?

The **Brasil: Nunca Mais** (Brazil: Never Again) project — mobilization, research, critical study, archive, and publication — shares the historical moment: the transitional years toward democracy. While the country lived under the ghostly shadow of an authoritarian regime — repression, surveillance, persecution, censorship, and torture — there was also the spark of memory to be carried into the future. From these loose threads of memory, the idea of creating a trail of information, facts, and denunciation, as seen in **Brasil: Nunca Mais**, was born. Subconsciously, it is human nature to draw lessons from the past to guide our thoughts and actions for the future. It is a constant struggle to build a democratic public life, rejecting any form of repression that threatens survival, which is, ultimately, a form of political violence.

Secondly, the song’s poetic clarity instills a kind of hopeful defiance, a “clear path for my Brazil, despite the pain.” This resonates deeply with the will and civic courage of the team and civil institutions that worked clandestinely and anonymously for six years, pursuing undeniable facts in the pursuit of justice. As stated in the investigative journalistic account of **Brasil: Nunca Mais**, on its first pages, “this book is the report of a human rights investigation. (...) It is also the anatomy of resistance.”

It was in the possibility of this resistance, of knowing it and embracing it, that Veloso sang, with melancholy, of the idea of visionary vertigo — the same feeling evoked, in one way or another, by the protagonists of this endeavor: Eny Raimundo Moreira, Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh, Luiz Carlos Sigmaringa Seixas, Paulo Vannucchi, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, Reverend Jaime Wright, and many others. They all believed in the relentless defense of human rights as the essence of a democratic state governed by law.

Thirty-nine years after **Brasil: Nunca Mais**, on the 60th anniversary of the military coup, we honor the memory of these individuals and their civic actions as an example to prevent certain shameful events from recurring or becoming chronic in our socio-political dynamics. Moreover, an undeniable desire remains for truth, reparation, and social justice, which continues to serve as a guiding light.

Thus, this exhibition should be able to reconstruct this path of visionary vertigo: a story that cannot be ignored, which has been erased from public debate over the years, with insufficient reach to new generations. Moreover, just as the exhibition delves into the material and immaterial memory of the project, its ultimate goal is to contribute to constructing historical awareness, inspiring others to engage with the displayed content critically.

In general, considering the country's recent history, the exhibition anchors itself in the present, offering a trail of historical reconstruction and insights into the importance of this debate in today's context. This invariably touches upon the ongoing violence of the state against its minorities and vulnerable populations. Ultimately, it is about examining the past with ethical responsibility: illuminating the future, enhancing our understanding, and extracting the richness of human life from it.

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As we recount the story of **Brasil: Nunca Mais**, it was also necessary to bring contemporary cultural expressions into the exhibition, addressing issues intertwined with that project from almost four decades ago. In this way, contemporary Brazilian art has taken a prominent place in the exhibition, helping to build a more complex understanding for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. The selected works come from three distinct sources, and thus, three conceptual and spatial paths to be explored: the first is a collection of works created under the conditions of imprisonment by political prisoners, all of which are part of the Alípio Freire Archive, housed at the Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo; the second is selected from the Pinacoteca Collection, featuring both works from the institution and those from the Roger Wright collection on loan; and by invitation, a third group includes artists from three different generations who, in some way, relate to the depicted scenario. This group contains Carlos Zilio, Cildo Meireles, Claudio Tozzi, Rivane Neuenschwander, and Rafael Pagatini. It is understood that this selection is just a tiny glimpse of the vast constellation of works that reflect the possible landscape of **Brasil: Nunca Mais**.

**Diego Matos**  
Curator

# TRANSLATING THE JOURNEY OF BRAZIL: NEVER AGAIN

Initially called Testimonies for Peace (TPP), the **Brasil: Nunca Mais** (Brazil: Never Again) project (covering March 1964 to April 1979) was undertaken between the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. One of its greatest triumphs was creating a narrative structure with a strongly affirmative and irrefutable character, revealing the most heinous aspects of the regime of exception that had taken hold in Brazil.

Confronting the discourse of normalcy and the democratic veneer of the dictatorship was only possible with irrefutable material evidence. To achieve this, the target was the documentation in the official military archives, including thoroughly archived records regarding political processes in military justice institutions (in this case, the Superior Military Court – STM). Lawyers defending political prisoners gained almost daily access to all the materials archived in these cases.

In this context, the written word, both declared and verified, became the critical element for corroborating the violent and terroristic nature of the state. Torture was not sporadic but somewhat institutionalized as state policy, all in the name of so-called security against a largely fictitious enemy labeled communism, as well as to maintain a supposed state of harmonic permanence under the National Security Doctrine.

Thus, the written word was vital, and the narrated text (written or spoken) became the instrument of presence — both in psychoanalytical reflection and in creating a material basis for historical evidence. The narrated text appeared, for instance, in archival documents from the genesis of **Brasil: Nunca Mais** and in the research derived from it. This material is now being showcased in the exhibition. As Professor Ana Maria de Almeida Camargo from the History Department at USP once said, “Archival documents have undeniable probative value.” It is important to note that Professor Camargo was responsible for systematizing all the material and providing conceptual and historical structure and order.

As described in the book *Brasil: Nunca Mais*, the choice of military justice cases was conceptually based on Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. In this work, Foucault demonstrated how one could reconstruct the history of an era through archived penal cases from the judiciary. The state’s personality and its methods of operation could be found in the archives. Furthermore, as lawyer Eny Moreira pointed out, it was urgent to safeguard these archives before official bodies could destroy them. Something similar had occurred during the Vargas dictatorship in Brazil.

More broadly, if we look across Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, we see historical parallels in these contexts, which inevitably resulted in similar instances of extreme state violence. This violence was always justified by a paranoid logic of security — a kind of ideology that sought to maintain the status quo at any cost in deeply unequal societies in socioeconomic terms, where political decisions and wealth were concentrated in the hands of a few. This widened the colonial divide of exploitation and suffering, contrary to Christian thought and practice. This is why churches and their communities played such a strategic role, conceptually and materially, in the fight against this state of violence. Their leadership is prominently recognized in Lawrence Weschler’s book *A Miracle, A Universe*.

For a foreign audience, Weschler dissected what the **Brasil: Nunca Mais** project represented the most forceful response from Brazilian civil society to the violence and brutality of the Civil-Military Dictatorship, which lasted 21 years. Following the investigative journalism approach, Weschler came to Brazil and conducted extensive research, gathering data, testimonies, and responses about **Brasil: Nunca Mais**. In his valuable analysis of the facts, he also explored how the Church played a strategic role in fostering resistance and providing community support to victims of political persecution. This investigation generously delves into these countries' socioeconomic and political history, especially Brazil and Uruguay. He then reconstructs the motivations that led to the coups, which gave rise to governments aligned with the aggressive, paranoid thinking of military life, the reactionary ambitions of the right-wing elite, and the contrived fight against the so-called abstract enemy: communism. The 1985 publication of **Brasil: Nunca Mais** became one of the most successful non-fiction books of the 1980s. All initiatives that recall this investigative effort of denunciation and documentation significantly raise awareness among young people. For example, journalist and researcher Lucas Figueiredo wrote a compelling book that narrates the **Brasil: Nunca Mais** experience and examines the military's various attempts to discredit what had been revealed. Among these failed reactions was the publication of the book *Orvil*, which only came to light in 2007. While they questioned the veracity of **Brasil: Nunca Mais**, they also revealed the existence of still-secret archives.

**Brasil: Nunca Mais** materials and related archives are a rich source of data — names, acronyms, and dates — warranting graphic design work to accompany the exhibition, along with explanatory texts. These conceptual paths converge into three elements: first, a narrative (a re-graphing of an adventure), where we build a timeline and spatial map of the events; second, a structure with its documents (informing the history), translated into the graphic designs displayed throughout the exhibition; and third, the characters (who shaped this story), from the victim to the perpetrator. Most importantly, the characters who were the protagonists of **Brasil: Nunca Mais** have been given prominence, with the consent of those who could and wished to collaborate. Thus, we have the generous testimonies of these individuals featured in the exhibition content.

In this way, the exhibition translating the research behind **Brasil: Nunca Mais** presents, in a didactic manner, the origins of the political-military project, the national and international contexts involved, and the entire repressive apparatus (including its main agents). Of course, the exhibition emphasizes torture as the ultimate form of violence, a despicable method for extracting information, along with the disappearances and unresolved deaths, and finally, the political-legal structure that sustained the dictatorial regime, validating political processes and convictions. Faced with these points, the question remains: how can we illustrate the imagery surrounding these facts? What images represent or give meaning to this story? Perhaps the creation of a materiality translated into an exhibition is our first clue to an answer.

# THE STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE BRAZIL: NEVER AGAIN PROJECT: PROJECT A AND PROJECT B

The **Brasil: Nunca Mais** (Brazil: Never Again) project, conceived in 1979 and officially launched in the second half of that year, had several phases organized into two distinct material paths. The first involved compiling the research, designated as **Project A**, which included all the reports produced, and the second resulted in the publication of the book summary, widely circulated and referred to as **Project B**. **Project A** was also linked to physical archives, containing all the compiled and properly organized cases.

The research and copying of materials focused on military justice cases, particularly those at the Supreme Military Court, between 1964 and 1979. This was the first phase of the project. As the material was photocopied, especially in Brasília (with the support of lawyer Luiz Carlos Sigmaringa Seixas and his team), shipments of paperwork were sent to São Paulo, archived, and microfilmed. The microfilms were later sent to the World Council of Churches for safekeeping.

Meanwhile, the **Brasil: Nunca Mais** team worked to organize and systematize the material, build the archive, and create reports. These reports contained procedural data, case considerations, and a qualitative information analysis. This entire effort was made possible by a collaborative team of legal, historical, and social experts. Thus, **Project A** was completed. Its “offspring” would be **Project B**, the widely recognized book. The numbers associated with this research are impressive: the archive contains over a million photocopies of case records, comprising material from 707 cases (expanded to 710 with the digitization and development of **Brasil: Nunca Mais Digit@l**). The **Project A** report totals 6,971 pages, from cover to cover. Meanwhile, the 311-page book is the journalistic summary known as **Project B**.

It is essential to mention that the entire project was coordinated in terms of activities and administration, with strict control over timelines, supervision, task management, and resource handling. Three communication levels were established: the first between the World Council of Churches, primarily through Philip Potter, and religious leaders in Brazil, led by Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns and Jaime Wright; the second between these religious leaders and the project coordinators, especially Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh, Paulo Vannuchi, Leda Corazza, and Carlos Lichtsztejn; and finally, between these coordinators and the various working groups. For **Project A**, when it came to the core of the research, historian Ana Maria de Almeida Camargo played a crucial role in structuring the gathered information and systematizing the archive and research process, working closely with Paulo Vannuchi. If **Project A** organizes, informs, and analyzes, **Project B** recounts, summarizes, and disseminates.

## PROJECT A

**Project A** includes the core research with six TOMES (twelve volumes) and their corresponding ANNEXES (partially translated into the graphic production of this exhibition). Additionally, the original Archive or microfilmed copies of the cases and their records were photocopied over the years, giving probative value to the project as a whole. Thus, a platform for sustaining the integrity of the facts was created.

Today, **Project A** can be accessed in two ways: through direct, in-person research at the Edgard Leuenroth Archive (AEL), part of the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences (IFCH) at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), or through online consultation via the AEL *Digit@l* program, where all digitized **Brasil: Nunca Mais** materials are available. Additionally, the research can be accessed via a public website (<https://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/pt-br>), part of the digitization, organization, and dissemination project based on the repatriated microfilms.

As described on the project website, this work was conceived by *Armazém Memória* and the Federal Public Ministry, a collaboration between these two entities and the Public Archives of the State of São Paulo. From the start, partners in this initiative included the Institute for Relational Policies (IPR), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Brazilian Bar Association / Rio de Janeiro Section (OAB-RJ), the National Archive, and the Center for Research Libraries/ Latin American Microform Project (LAMP), based in Chicago, USA.

Over 1,800 pages of victim testimonies detailing their torture were transcribed to give an idea of the scope of **Project A**. The horror documented in these pages is registered in Tome V of **Project A** and strategically edited into the book's first chapter. It serves as a powerful, jarring introduction. Tome II, Volume I deserves special attention, as it contains the research structure and methodology. Facsimiles of these research tools are displayed in this exhibition.

## **PROJECT B**

Upon completing **Project A** between late 1983 and early 1984, the remaining team members agreed to produce a summary book to be released after the return of democracy. This publication was designed with journalistic language, resulting in a dense, informative report structured into 21 chapters divided into six parts: Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Punishment; The Repressive System; Repression Against Everyone and Everything; Subversion of Law; A Regime Marked by Torture; and The Extreme Limits of Torture. Three key figures were invited for the final writing task: Paulo Vannuchi, a journalist and team member involved in every stage of **Project A**; Frei Betto, a Dominican friar, journalist, and writer; and the award-winning journalist Ricardo Kotscho. Drawing from **Project A's** material, the final version of the book was written. Initially published by Vozes on July 15, 1985, the book is now in its 41st edition. Under Jaime Wright's coordination, the book was translated into English the following year and published by the prestigious U.S. publisher Random House.



This content is part of the exhibition **A Visionary Vertigo — Brazil: Never Again**,  
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