

ACTIVE INTOLERANCE

**MICHEL FOUCAULT,
THE PRISONS INFORMATION GROUP,
AND THE FUTURE OF ABOLITION**

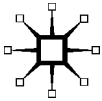
**EDITED BY PERRY ZURN
AND ANDREW DILTS**



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Active Intolerance: An Introduction

Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts

At a press conference on February 8, 1971, Michel Foucault announced the creation of Le Groupe d'information sur les prisons (the Prisons Information Group [GIP]). Reading aloud what would retrospectively be dubbed the GIP manifesto, Foucault presented the GIP as an activist organization committed to amplifying the voices of those with first-hand knowledge of the prison, thereby creating a space for articulations and assessments *from below*. As the manifesto states:

We plan to make known what the prison is: who goes there, how and why they go there, what happens, what life is like for the prisoners and, equally, for the supervisory staff, what the buildings, diet, and hygiene are like, how internal regulation, medical supervision, and the workshops function; how one gets out and what it is, in our society, to be one of those who has gotten out.¹

The GIP planned to do this by letting “those who have an experience of prison speak.”² It was the GIP’s mission to honor and circulate subjugated knowledge about the prison.

According to this initial declaration, the GIP sought to “make the reality known,” through the collection and dissemination of information from prisoners about prisons. As its statement published a month later in *J'accuse* indicates, however, the GIP did more than work for transparency. It also aimed to assess and resist the realities it brought to light, realities it marked with a simple, devastating term: the intolerable.

Let what is intolerable—imposed, as it is, by force and by silence—cease to be accepted. We do not make our inquiry in order to accumulate knowledge, but to heighten our intolerance and *make it an active*

intolerance. Let us become people intolerant of prisons, the legal system, the hospital system, psychiatric practice, military service, etc.³

The purpose of the GIP's information gathering and dissemination was not to collect knowledge for its own sake. Instead, the GIP was driven by a conviction that the site of the prison—as a site of symbolic and material struggle, of calculative curiosity, and of crushing indifference—was intolerable. For members of the GIP, the only appropriate response to such an intolerable reality was active intolerance. This intolerance, moreover, as a series of political strategies and tactics, was directed not simply at the prison, but at all those sites where discipline and oppression effectively silence and subjugate.

This book is a critical interrogation of the Prisons Information Group and its legacy. As such, it is a sustained reflection on the interplay between the intolerable and active intolerance, between information and action, and between theory and practice. It is first concerned, then, with what the GIP thought. It delves into the GIP's diagnosis of the prison system as intolerable, focusing particularly on the intolerable treatment of incarcerated bodies and imprisoned voices. It also explores the GIP's theoretical debts. Here, our primary pathway is the work of Michel Foucault, the GIP's noted cofounder. While we allow his work to illuminate the GIP, however, we do not mistake one for the other. Second, this book is concerned with what the GIP did. Its members were not reformers (in the sense of trying to “fix” the prison), nor were they outright abolitionists (lobbying to dismantle the prison). And yet, insofar as they worked against the silencing, isolation, and violence of the prison, they engaged in abolitionist praxis, intent on tearing down prison walls. Third, this book unites these dual concerns by investigating how the GIP's assessment of the intolerable is itself *a series of practices*. Likewise, it seeks to understand what active intolerance to intolerable things might entail as *a habit of thinking*, replete with discursive analysis and analytic methods. Finally, this book attends to the wellsprings of thought and praxis. For the GIP, when we ask where information and action begin, it is not with intellectuals or practitioners, but with those most directly affected by any given system. If, then, “none of us is sure to escape prison”—that is, if the carceral system is constitutive of our contemporary social milieu—then active intolerance for all of us begins with attending to those who know the prison best: those who have lived there and those who have died there.⁴

In the introductory remarks that follow, we offer a brief history of the GIP, we reflect on a variety of interpretive reductions of the GIP,

and we delineate how *Active Intolerance* presses us beyond these reductions by attending to the complexity of the GIP's history in light of our present. Ultimately, we stage this eminently historical work as a contribution to the future of prison abolitionist thought and practice.

I History of the GIP

The roots of the GIP can be traced to the political turbulence of May 1968 in France, marked by relentless demonstrations, protests, strikes, and occupations. This Marxist, anti-capitalist, and anti-institutional movement found its first and staunchest home in the universities. As the French government cracked down on the movement, a number of students and intellectuals were incarcerated. In September 1970, 29 of them initiated a hunger strike, insisting that, as political prisoners, they should be treated as such and granted political status (in contrast to common law prisoners).⁵ They reinitiated the hunger strike in January 1971, when they garnered the support of people on the outside, especially the Organization of Political Prisoners (OPP). Several people approached Michel Foucault to suggest he get involved in the OPP. He confided to his partner, Daniel Defert, that he was really excited at the prospect because it meant attending to otherwise silenced voices (i.e., prisoners' voices), a practice very important to his scholarly work.⁶ It was Foucault who suggested the OPP become Le Groupe d'information sur les prisons (Prisons Information Group [GIP]). The GIP would not publicly antagonize the French government on behalf of political prisoners; rather, they would surreptitiously collect and disseminate descriptions of prison conditions from prisoners themselves. On the final day of the second hunger strike, February 8, 1971, Foucault delivered the "GIP manifesto." The GIP would aim not to shed light on the prison—this "black box" of our social system—but to let the open mouths of prisoners illuminate that box from within.⁷

Although the GIP's primary address, 285 Rue Vaugirard, was Foucault's own apartment and he shouldered the brunt of the communication responsibilities, he shared leadership of the GIP with Jean-Marie Domenach, editor of *Esprit*, and historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet.⁸ Both Domenach and Vidal-Naquet were active leftists and vociferous opponents of the French military tactics (especially imprisonment and torture) used during the Algerian War (1954–1962). The GIP quickly became an object of wide interest among French intellectuals, including Hélène Cixous, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Rancière. In its early stages, the GIP benefited from the attentions of

Jean-Paul Sartre and especially Simone de Beauvoir, who worked tirelessly in the campaign for political prisoners.⁹ Danielle Rancière—a Maoist leader and an expert in the development of inquiries into labor conditions—was, moreover, critical to the formation of GIP questionnaires and “intolerance-investigations.”¹⁰ But the GIP pulled from an even larger swath, attracting doctors, lawyers, magistrates, journalists, psychologists, psychiatrists, activists, prison staff, prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. As Foucault and Vidal-Naquet recall, it was “a real bushfire.”¹¹ Most of the prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families worked anonymously for their own protection; as such, they will remain unnamed although not unmarked in perpetuity. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that, on principle, the GIP was not a platform for academic personalities interested in the question of punishment. Rather, it was an umbrella organization dedicated to sustaining the voices of those who had direct experience of the prison itself.

As the group developed, it joined forces with like-minded movements, including Lotta Continua, a radical leftist Italian organization of students and immigrants, often targeted for gratuitous incarceration. Jacques Donzelot served as the GIP’s liaison. Then there was the Black Panther Party (BPP), a Black nationalist and socialist organization with deep prison abolitionist roots. Catherine van Bulow and Jean Genet built strong bridges with the BPP and initiated collaboration on the GIP’s later publications.¹² However, the GIP’s debts were not limited to global connections as it also worked closely with local groups such as the Women’s Liberation Movement, the Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front, the Asylums Information Group, and the Immigrants Information and Support Group.¹³ One branch of the GIP, begun by Claude Rouault, investigated the women’s prison of La Roquette in an effort to understand the specific issues faced by incarcerated women. As Defert recalls, while the GIP first linked up with Marxist revolutionaries, it allied itself more and more with feminist, gay, immigrant, Black, and mental health activists.¹⁴ It did so with the understanding that different social groups are differentially criminalized and that this criminalization is directly related to the egregious rates and character of incarceration. This insight, which Foucault is perhaps best known for expanding at length in his subsequent lectures at the Collège de France and in *Discipline and Punish*, finds its roots here.

From this seething pot of intellectual, social, and transnational collaboration with incarcerated people, the GIP produced a rich variety of initiatives. As an information group, the GIP had a threefold mission: (1) *donner la parole* or to give prisoners the floor,¹⁵ (2) to publicize

their identification of *l'intolérable*, the insuperable living conditions in French prisons,¹⁶ and (3) to serve as *un relais* or a relay station, between prisoners and so-called free citizens, as well as between GIP chapters and other activist organizations across France.¹⁷ The GIP pursued these interrelated goals in a number of ways. It collected information through smuggled prison questionnaires and then published it in booklets and leaflets. Some of these booklets formed the *Intolérable* series. The GIP also publicized this information, including in particular each prison's list of demands, through press releases and press conferences. The GIP developed a prison documentary, titled *Les Prisons aussi*, and it staged a play on the Nancy prison revolt: *Le Procès de la mutinerie de Nancy*. In fact, moving beyond mere information-gathering, the GIP catalyzed several revolts and prison resistance efforts as it progressed on its path, most famously those that occurred at Clairveaux, Nancy, and Toul. Finally, although the GIP described its primary aim as informational, and its members refused to provide a "recipe"¹⁸ for prison reform—fearing such efforts would merely entrench the prison as a social institution—the GIP nevertheless did facilitate a number of minor reforms directly focused on improving the conditions for incarcerated people. These included the introduction of newspapers into prisons and the reinstatement of rights to Christmas packages. Ultimately, the GIP's collection and dissemination tactics constituted the work of active critique, refusing any clean divide between theory and praxis.

The *Intolérable* series included four booklets, each dedicated to interrogating intolerable realities of the prison system. The first, *Investigation into 20 Prisons*, coedited by Defert, Christine Martineau, and Danielle Rancière, collected responses to the initial GIP questionnaires. Those responses described a place of filth, isolation, malnutrition, censorship, beatings, slave-like conditions, and capricious governance. The second, *Investigation into a Model Prison: Fleury-Mérogis*, undertaken by Jacques-Alain Miller and François Regnault, collected various reports from the supposedly most progressive prison in France. These reports indicate that Fleury-Mérogis was not a more humane prison, but rather a more masterful, calculative one. The third, developed by Jean Genet and titled *The Assassination of George Jackson*, collected material on the BPP as a movement, George Jackson's role therein, and the media cover-up of his death. The fourth, *Prison Suicides*, a collaborative effort between Defert and Deleuze, was a report on the suicide epidemic in French prisons. The booklet highlighted the experience of incarcerated gay men in particular and the steep price of institutionalized homophobia. Finally, a companion booklet, coedited by Cixous and Jean Gattegno and titled *Lists of Demands*, gathered together the demands from recent

prison revolts at Toul, Loos-Lès-Lille, Melun, Nancy, Fresnes, Nîmes, among others.¹⁹ These demands indicated, as did the *Intolérable* series as a whole, both the brokenness of prison and the anger, insight, and resilience of prisoners.

Narrating the GIP's story, Defert marks the sometimes suffocating role of intellectuals in a movement purportedly focused on the subaltern.²⁰ He claims that the effort of intellectuals involved in the GIP to subvert their own position of knowledge and power was ultimately "a failure [*un échec*]."²¹ The only one to have succeeded, he suggests, was Dr. Edith Rose, a Toul psychiatrist eventually fired for daring to reveal the torturous methods of prison health care personnel.²² Nevertheless, as the GIP gained traction, its previously incarcerated members grew in both number and strength. By the end of 1972, and led by Serge Livrozet,²³ they formed their own organization: Comité d'action des prisonniers (the Prisoners Action Committee [CAP]). Having understood itself as essentially provisional, the GIP disbanded in favor of the CAP. Unsurprisingly, the CAP worked differently. While the GIP expressly rejected reform, the CAP insisted on abolishing criminal records, life sentences, and censorship, as well as providing proper health care and legal support. Simultaneously, they demanded the abolition of prison and the death penalty, the latter of which was secured in 1981. Still, once the intellectual face of the GIP had vanished—and despite the publication of *Le journal du CAP* from 1972 to 1980—public attention lagged. Perhaps the more vibrant afterlife of the GIP was not the CAP at all, but rather Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975), which has arguably overshadowed (and overdetermined) the memory of the GIP.

With its short life—as brief, perhaps, as it was effective—the GIP provides a poignant image of collaboration, the extent and limits of intellectual labor, and the raw force of resistance at the margins.

II Resisting Reductions of the GIP

The GIP provides a rich terrain for academic and activist reflection. Perhaps the most obvious nodes of exploration are the following: the figure of Foucault, the status of information, and the GIP's unique tactical strategies. In fact, most scholarly engagements with the GIP have focused expressly on these three elements. To limit our attention exclusively to Foucault as the GIP's primary actor, information as its chief occupation, or the discreteness of the GIP enterprise, however, does a disservice to the GIP's complex legacy. The GIP passed in and

out of existence amid intense collaborations and a spirit of invention that outlived it. The chapters in this volume, then, set out not only to engage deeply with Foucault scholarship, information activism, and the literature on the GIP, but also to press beyond them toward the collective practice of abolition.

First, in the United States, if the GIP is known at all, it is primarily through Foucault's association with it. From this perspective, the GIP becomes little more than a footnote to Foucault's corpus,²⁴ a moment in his biography, and an interesting, but not philosophically central, frame through which to read *Discipline and Punish*.²⁵ The self-consciously collective nature of the GIP is lost both literally (with collective statements by the GIP being attributed solely to Foucault) and theoretically (with the GIP and Foucault's thought being taken as identical). There are material reasons for this interpretive tendency. Only a limited archive of GIP documents is presently available in English translation.²⁶ Moreover, until the 2003 publication of GIP archival material, the vast majority of GIP documents available were to be found in Foucault's collected works, *Dits et Écrits*.²⁷ Yet, even where GIP texts were available (and in English translation), the tendency has been to read them as expressions of Foucault's early thoughts on the prison and prison struggles, and not as the product of collective authorship. The danger here is not simply one of misattribution, but of eliding the GIP's central project of acting as a "relay station," a fundamentally collaborative organization. Allowing Foucault's connection to the GIP to overdetermine GIP scholarship, in fact, (ironically) imposes the author-function in a way antithetical both to the GIP's mission and to Foucault's own practice of writing and speaking.²⁸ To honor the GIP, scholarship should dramatically shift its attention to include other thinkers and actors, especially when those people are currently, or formerly had been, incarcerated.

Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done to understand the role of the GIP in Foucault's intellectual development. A critical interpretation of the GIP allows us to recenter Foucault as both a collaborator and an abolitionist. Overwhelmingly, Foucault's collaborative projects have received little attention in comparison to his individual efforts. If we take seriously Foucault's role as a member of the GIP, not in order to understand only the contours of his thought but also the nature of collaborative thought itself, we can find better models for how intellectual labor and abolitionist politics can work in concert and resist a theory-practice divide. As Foucault states, "The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' . . . ; rather it is

to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument . . . In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: *it is practice*.”²⁹ Foucault’s claim here rests not simply on rejecting the theory-practice divide, but also recognizing the collaborative and intersubjective nature of the practice of theory. The “intellectual” becomes an accomplice.³⁰ Furthermore, we must consider Foucault as a practical abolitionist. To a degree, it is puzzling to have to make this case. While the language of “prison abolition” appears only briefly in Foucault’s corpus,³¹ there are numerous statements, lectures, interviews, and newspaper contributions in which Foucault actively resists the notion of a “model” prison, of “alternatives” to the prison, and the desire to identify “replacement” penalties.³² In each of these statements, Foucault’s broader critique of the prison and the penitentiary technique pushes toward a recognizably abolitionist framework, concerned primarily with addressing and undermining the conditions that make the prison possible, thinkable, and “self-evident,” rather than attempting to “fix” or “correct” the prison or penal techniques.

Second, when interpreted on its own terms, the GIP is typically read as merely an “information group” and not also as a political force, active in the project of abolishing prisons in France. Attending to the GIP’s insistence that it aimed only to facilitate the circulation of information, commentators repeatedly assert that the GIP was not a reform group. It did not try to change the prison. It merely meant to gather information. It did not aim to unsettle the prison in any radical way. It was a provisional enterprise. This interpretation is a failure in two senses: first, it over-emphasizes some claims of the GIP over others and, second, it misunderstands the radical nature of “information gathering” as the GIP conceived it. While many accounts categorize prison resistance efforts along a continuum of radicality—from information gathering, to reform projects, and ultimately prison abolition—the GIP refused any simple distinction between “information” and “action.” In the first *Intolerable* booklet, they write that their “intolerance-investigations” should be read as “a political act,” “the first episode of a struggle,” and as “an attack front.”³³ The GIP’s particular form of political action through information gathering was itself abolitionist in nature, focused on disrupting the epistemology and therefore the operation of the prison. Insofar as the prison system relies on the restriction of information flows both between prisons and between prisoners and the public at large, to facilitate these flows is inherently disruptive to the prison. To cultivate active intolerance through the dissemination of information was to, explicitly or not, call for a world without prisons.

“It is imperative,” the GIP wrote, “that no part of the prison be left in peace.”³⁴

A critical interpretation of the GIP allows us not merely to note the details that were collected or the information that was amassed, but to attend to the legacy of the GIP in contemporary prison struggles. The GIP focused its attention on prison uprisings, including those at Toul, Nancy, and Attica as well as the aftermath of the “political assassination” of George Jackson.³⁵ Such prison struggles were central to the GIP’s project and its call to attend to the acts of resistance and refusal taken up by incarcerated persons and not merely the public intellectuals and supporters who work with them. “Jackson’s death,” they wrote, “is at the origin of the revolts that exploded in the prisons, from Attica to Ashkelon. Prison struggle has now become a new front of the revolution.”³⁶ Our own attention should also be focused on the way the GIP’s practice (of disseminating information about the intolerable conditions of incarcerated bodies and imprisoned voices) is mirrored in prison struggles in the United States today. From the coordinated mass hunger strikes that originated at Pelican Bay State Prison, a supermax prison in California (which demanded an end to indefinite solitary confinement and specific improvements in living conditions; at the high point in 2013, roughly 30,000 incarcerated persons were refusing meals across the state prison system),³⁷ to the work stoppages and strikes that occurred throughout Georgia prisons in 2010,³⁸ to the launching of the Free Alabama Movement in 2013 (documenting and broadcasting inhumane prison conditions with contraband mobile phone cameras),³⁹ to hunger strikes in immigration detention centers in 2014 and 2015 (organized especially by mothers and other persons held in women’s facilities),⁴⁰ and to the ongoing uprisings across the United States from Ferguson to Baltimore in response to police murders of African Americans, each of these examples demonstrate that the prison continues to be a location of the struggle against marginalization and oppression. These are instances of the same kind of self-organization and radical mobilization, which, while lacking any direct genealogy to the GIP, nevertheless cultivate an active intolerance to what is intolerable. They demand our attention.

Third, most scholarship concerning the GIP focuses on it as a short-lived social movement, with unique tactics, a relatively closed archive, and a short time frame. In some cases, the GIP has been read as a shining moment of organized struggle on the French left in the post-1968 period, overshadowing many other important moments in the French prison resistance movement.⁴¹ In doing so, scholarship obscures both

the generalized grounds for resistance that the GIP established and its successor, the Prisoners Action Committee (CAP).⁴² The ex-prisoners who formed the CAP were, by and large, nonrepresentative of the prison population.⁴³ They were already politicized, already activists, insisting that the prison is a tool of the bourgeois to suppress poor and otherwise marginalized groups.⁴⁴ “All that we ask is absolute reform,”⁴⁵ they said, including the abolition of criminal records, travel bands, debtors’ prison, the death penalty, life without parole, and the prison itself.⁴⁶ Through its efforts, not least of which was *Le Journal du CAP*,⁴⁷ a broader, even more collaborative and diverse movement than the GIP was born. Preferring to analyze the GIP rather than the CAP obscures the GIP’s legacy, misses the GIP’s motto, privileges academic legacies of GIP intellectuals, and again uses an individualistic rather than collaborative lens.

A critical interpretation of the GIP, insofar as it takes the GIP’s motto (*donner la parole*) to heart, must retool our analyses of incarceration, detention, and confinement to think with prisoners rather than about them.⁴⁸ Such a shift in the epistemological register is itself a part of prison abolition and projects of building abolition-democracy.⁴⁹ It requires following the thread of prisoners’ voices and prisoners’ actions in a larger social movement.⁵⁰ To think with prisoners honestly and without fear is an abolitionist act; for, it opens up the future in ways that are not yet known and dismantles the social stratifications and forms of moral differentiation that undergird the prison.⁵¹ As Foucault put it in a conversation with students in 1971, “Our action . . . isn’t concerned with the soul of the man *behind* the convict, but it seeks to obliterate the deep division that lies between innocence and guilt.”⁵² The GIP offers us a model for this work: to give prisoners the floor as a part of thinking. The experiences of prison struggles, riots, uprisings, strikes, and actions are of philosophical substance, as are reflections and analyses of confinement offered by those who are presently or had been formerly confined. This is a requirement not simply of doing critical theory and philosophy of prisons and punishment, but of doing critical theory and philosophy more generally. This is, in part, because contemporary academic philosophy functions through the exclusion of incarcerated philosophers, defining itself as an academic discipline predicated on a distinction between prisons and universities.⁵³ As the incarcerated philosopher Andre Pierce puts it:

In order to keep our truth alive and honest, we need to tell our story with uncensored gore. Where our story is ugly, we need to tell it without cosmetic surgery. We need to boldly speak directly in the face of

those oppressive elements in society and show them the products of their destruction . . . The danger in allowing others to tell our story is that the narration risks distortion.⁵⁴

Thankfully, an increasing number of works in recent years have taken this claim seriously and resist reifying distinctions between thinkers on the inside and outside.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, much remains to be done.

This volume aims to contribute to GIP literature, Foucault studies, and the projects of information activism and prison abolition. More generally, however, it aims to develop a self-reflective analysis of the GIP and, in doing so, to illuminate our own current moment of racialized mass incarceration in the United States. We therefore attend to the GIP as an inherently collaborative abolitionist effort, trained on subjugated knowledges and generative beyond itself, both temporally and geographically. This is one way we understand the work of *active intolerance*. Such an interpretive approach does not entertain Foucault, information, or the GIP reductively, but expansively, in a way that allows us to reconfigure how we think about the GIP in concert with contemporary political theory, philosophy, and critical prison studies.

III Legacy of the GIP Today

The significance of the GIP in Paris in the early 1970s is uncontested. Its legacy today, particularly in the United States, however, remains imprecise and underexplored. Ultimately, the chapters in this volume seek to rectify this fact. By analyzing the GIP from both historical and contemporary perspectives, they reimagine its contributions not simply to Foucault studies and current prison activism, but also to our most basic conceptualizations of embodiment and voice. Ranging from Marxism to neoliberalism, from issues of race and immigration to hunger strikes and the aging prison population, as well as addressing the status of subjugated knowledge and a variety of academic failures, this volume cultivates a rich landscape at the intersections of contemporary political theory, critical prison philosophy, and the project of prison abolition.

Part I (History: The GIP and Foucault in Context) sets the stage by analyzing the significance of the GIP for Foucault studies. Resisting the temptation to allow Foucault studies to overdetermine our interpretation of the GIP, this section reads Foucault and the GIP antagonistically together in order to better understand both. Chronologically, the GIP sits squarely at the center of Foucault's methodological arch: archeology, genealogy, and ethics. As such, it mobilizes his concerns with power,

knowledge, and resistance in the context of marginalization. This section contends that the GIP was not a tangential activity for Foucault, but one that simultaneously reflected and affected the development of his thought. In “The Abolition of Philosophy” (chapter 1), Ladelle McWhorter argues that Foucault’s rejection of academic philosophy in favor of political activism through the GIP directly informed his later reconceptualization of philosophy as a practice of freedom, publicly engaged in a critique of the present. In “The Untimely Speech of the GIP Counter-Archive” (chapter 2), Lynne Huffer models her encounter with the GIP archive on Foucault’s encounter in *History of Madness*; in both cases, she argues, the archive of marginalized voices is mobilized as a present event, jamming “the rational machinery of present-day carceral power-knowledge.” In “Conduct and Power: Foucault’s Methodological Expansions in 1971” (chapter 3), Colin Koopman analyzes the GIP as a politicizing force that contributed to not only the expansion of Foucault’s overtly political interests but also his political method of genealogy; both, Koopman insists, emphasize the critical salience of struggle. In “Work and Failure: Assessing the Prisons Information Group” (chapter 4), Perry Zurn conducts an internal critique of the GIP. After identifying criteria of failure implicit in the GIP and Foucault’s critique of the prison, Zurn explores the significance of failures shared by the GIP and the prison.

Part II (Body: Resistance and the Politics of Care) analyzes the prison as a particular technique of embodiment. While power is enacted upon the body, resistance is also enacted through the body. The chapters in this section trace both functions. They give special attention to the hunger strikes and prison suicides that mobilized the GIP, but they also analyze the place of medicine, psychiatry, eldercare, and disability care. Throughout, the aim of this section is to understand not only the disciplined body but the resistant body, producing as it does diagonal lines of force within the social fabric. In “Breaking the Conditioning: The Relevance of the Prisons Information Group” (chapter 5), Steve Champion (Adisa Kamara) explores how organizations like the GIP can support practices of resistance against the mental and physical conditioning of the prison. In “Between Discipline and Caregiving: Changing Prison Population Demographics and Possibilities for Self-Transformation” (chapter 6), Dianna Taylor explores the Gold Coats Program at the California Men’s Colony (CMC) in San Luis Obispo, California, where inmates care for their aging and cognitively impaired fellows. She argues that caregiving facilitates possibilities for inmate caregivers to constitute, understand, and relate to themselves

as other than delinquents. In “Unruliness without Rioting: Hunger Strikes in Contemporary Politics” (chapter 7), Falguni Sheth explores the hunger strike—as used by the GIP, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (a member of the Russian punk band Pussy Riot), and detainees in Guantánamo Bay—as a technology of political resistance. She argues that, in order for the hunger strike to deploy the body’s “life” as a currency, the strike must engender an element of publicity, whose trajectory influences but does not necessarily determine the outcome of the contestation.

Part III (Voice: Prisoners and the Public Intellectual) turns from questions of the body to questions of voice and discourse. Much like the body, the voice is a target of disciplinary power and a locale of resistance. The GIP was a battle of voices and information, speaking and hearing, reverberations and relays. The chapters in this part ask the question of who gets to have a voice? And what is at stake in having or giving a voice? In “Disrupted Foucault: Los Angeles’ Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA) and the Obsolescence of White Academic Raciality” (chapter 8), Dylan Rodríguez analyzes the GIP’s deep roots in the European academy and therefore its complicity in white supremacist interpretations of the carceral system. Rodríguez then contrasts the GIP with the CAPA, a Black, poor and working-class grassroots organization in Los Angeles that decenters whiteness. In “Investigations from Marx to Foucault” (chapter 9), Marcelo Hoffman rebuts the accusation that the GIP—Foucault in particular—constrained the voices of prisoners. By analyzing the GIP’s Marxist (and Maoist) roots, Hoffman argues that its investigations were never intended to neutrally represent prisoners’ voices but to expressly politicize them. In “The GIP as a Neoliberal Intervention: Trafficking in Illegible Concepts” (chapter 10), Shannon Winnubst contends that the GIP’s questionnaires, insofar as they traffic in banal details, cut against humanist ideology by blurring the boundary between innocence and guilt, ultimately frustrating neoliberal tendencies. In “The Disordering of Discourse: Voice and Authority in the GIP” (chapter 11), Nancy Luxon argues that the GIP probed the intersection of regimes of jurisdiction and veridiction by initiating a new genre of “seized speech” that might counter anonymous habit, so as to make visible struggles around voice, authorization, and publicity.

Part IV (Present: The Prison and Its Future[s]) addresses prison activism and abolition in the present moment. Given that the GIP fashioned itself in direct response to penal issues in 1970s France, what, therefore, are the restrictions of its use and the extrapolations that can be made

today? What lessons can be culled from the GIP's (and Foucault's) activist and philosophical practices for contemporary questions of prison theory and anti-prison praxis? In particular, we ask what changes with the introduction of contemporary US prison issues like mass/hyper incarceration, the death penalty, and prison abolition movements, as well as along axes of oppression like race, gender, sexuality, and disability. In "Beyond Guilt and Innocence: The Creaturely Politics of Prisoner Resistance Movements" (chapter 12), Lisa Guenther conducts a comparative study of the GIP and the Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor Collective, arguing that effective resistance to carceral power demands an affirmation of the creaturely needs, desires, and capacities that motivate and sustain political life. In "Resisting 'Massive Elimination': Foucault, Immigration, and the GIP" (chapter 13), Natalie Cisneros shows that "massive elimination," or immigrant detention and deportation practices, is a function of modern racism and deeply embedded in the Prison Industrial Complex. In "'Can They Ever Escape?' Foucault, Black Feminism, and the Intimacy of Abolition" (chapter 14), Steve Dillon reads the GIP documents alongside the writings of imprisoned revolutionary Black women in the 1970s. In doing so, Dillon argues that Black feminism provides an important analysis missing from the GIP and Foucault's writings: the intimate forms of anti-Black and heteropatriarchal domination produced by the prison regime.

At the heart of our analysis and that of the GIP is the identification of things that are intolerable, which form the basis of cultivating active intolerance. To that end, statements by Abu Ali Abdur'Rahman, Derrick Quintero, and Donald Middlebrooks (all currently incarcerated on death row at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution outside of Nashville, Tennessee) identify what are, for them, intolerable prison realities. From bad breath and too many beans (or not enough), to corporate monopoly, administrative violence, and rape—not to mention "the lack of honor and respect amongst those of our incarcerated community"—Abdur'Rahman, Quintero, and Middlebrooks canvass the sublime and mundane elements of what is, ultimately, an indiscriminate system of oppression. In doing so, their voices break against the prison as much as against our own easy categories of significance.

In sum, the contributions to *Active Intolerance* together push the boundaries of how we understand the intersections between prison theory and prison abolition. They offer a profound reimagination of Foucault's intellectual development, as well as the styles and stakes of contemporary prison activism and abolition. And they courageously interrogate the consistently difficult issues facing us today, especially

related to embodiment and voice. Ultimately, however, these essays provide us with insight into the nature of active intolerance as both a model of political engagement and a mode of philosophical reflection. Indeed, *Active Intolerance* insists that neither politics nor philosophy exist independently of each other or of the distinct creaturely needs of those consistently marginalized and hyperpoliced.

We write this in search of a different future.

Notes

1. GIP, "(Manifeste du GIP)" (1971), FDE1, no. 86, 1043. Most of the GIP documents (like this one) were written collaboratively. We cite their location in *Dits et Écrits* for ease of reference, but we emphasize that the ascription of many of these texts to Foucault as author is problematic at best and a misattribution at worst.
2. Foucault, "(Sur les prisons)" (1971), FDE1, no. 87, 1043.
3. Foucault, "(Sur les prisons)," 1044, emphasis added. On the title page of *Intolérable 1*, the GIP offers this list of intolerable things: "The courts, the cops, hospitals and asylums, school, military service, the press, the state, and above all the prisons" (FGIP-AL, 80/FGIP-I, 16).
4. GIP, "(Manifeste du GIP)," 1043.
5. Thank you to Daniel Defert for this important clarification. The demand for political status focused on the right to hold political meetings inside the prison, to get newspapers, and to receive visits from other members of their organizations.
6. Daniel Defert, "Le Moment GIP," *Une vie politique: Entretiens avec Philippe Artières et Eric Favereau* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 56.
7. GIP, "(Manifeste du GIP)," 1043.
8. For more on the role of the GIP in Foucault's life and thought, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (1989; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), esp. Chap. 16; David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), esp. Chap. 11; and James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), esp. Chap. 6.
9. Artières, "Chronologie," FGIP-I, 9–14.
10. See Marcelo Hoffman, "Foucault, the Prisoner Support Movement, and Disciplinary Power," *Foucault and Power: The Influence of Political Engagement on Theories of Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 15–46; Richard Wolin, "Foucault and the Maoists: Biopolitics and Engagement," *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 288–349; and Julian Bourg, "Part One," *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007).
11. Foucault and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Enquête sur les prisons: brisons les barreaux du silence" (1971), FDE1, no. 88, 1045.
12. See Brady Heiner, "Foucault and the Black Panthers," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 11.3 (2007): 320, 330; Edmund White, *Genet: A Bibliography* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993), Chap. 18.
13. Le Mouvement de libération des femmes (the MLF) (founded in 1970), Le Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire (the FHAR) (1971–1976), Le Groupe

- d'information sur les asiles (1972–present), and Le Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrées (1972–present). For general information on this collaboration, see Daniel Defert, “L'émergence d'un nouveau front: les prisons,” FGIP-AL, 323 and 326, and “Le Moment GIP,” *Une vie politique*, 63–65. For more on the question of women in French prisons at the time, see Anne Guérin, “Et les femmes?” *Prisonniers en révolte: Quotidien carcéral, mutineries et politique pénitentiaire en France (1970–1980)* (Paris: Agone, 2013), 301–329. For additional material on FHAR, see Didier Eribon, “Resistance and Counterdiscourse,” *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 310–318; Frederic Martel, *The Pink and the Black: Homosexuals in France since 1968* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); as well as the works of FHAR leader, Guy Hocquenghem, including *Homosexual Desire* (1972; Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
14. Defert, “L'émergence d'un nouveau front: les prisons,” 323.
 15. Foucault, “Je perçois l'intolérable” (1971), FDE1, no. 94, 1072; Daniel Defert, “Sur quoi repose le système pénitentiaire?” (1971), FGIP-AL, 129; Foucault, “Le grand enfermement” (1972), FDE1, no. 105, 1170.
 16. Foucault, “(Sur les prisons),” 1044; GIP, “Préface” (1971), *Enquête dans 20 prisons*, FDE1, no. 91, 1064.
 17. Foucault and Vidal-Naquet, “Enquête sur les prisons: brisons les barreaux du silence,” 1045; Foucault and Antoine Lazarus, “Luttes autour des prisons” (1979), FDE2, no. 273, 808.
 18. Foucault and Lazarus, “Luttes autour des prisons,” 813.
 19. Defert, “L'émergence d'un nouveau front,” 325. The GIP frequently met in Cixous's apartment (Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 230) and she played an important role in the Nancy Revolt, where she was badly beaten (Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 283). She also worked with the GIP, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Le Theatre du Soleil to organize a performance for immigrant factory workers (Defert, “L'émergence d'un nouveau front,” 323). In retrospect, she sees an intimate relationship between her involvement in the GIP and her early novel, *Dedans* (see Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 265).
 20. See Gayatri Spivak's famous critique of Foucault, and precisely this work, in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111.
 21. Defert, “L'émergence d'un nouveau front,” FGIP-AL, 318.
 22. Ibid. See also Edith Rose, “Rapport de Mme Rose, psychiatre de la Centrale de Toul” (1972), FGIP-AL, 164–168.
 23. Serge Livrozet is the author of several books, most famously *De la Prison à la révolte* (1973; Paris: L'Esprit frappeur, 1999), for which Foucault wrote the preface. See “Préface” (1973), FDE1, no. 116, 1262–1267.
 24. A significant exception to this trend is Nicolas Drolc's recent documentary, *Sur les toits–Hiver 1972: mutineries dans les prisons françaises* (Les Mutins, 2013).
 25. In 1980, Foucault characterized *Discipline and Punish* as a book that “owes much to the GIP . . . , if it contains two or three good ideas, it gleaned them from there.” Foucault, “Toujours les prisons” (1980), FDE2, no. 273, 915.
 26. The few GIP-related documents currently available in English translation are: “What Our Prisoners Want From Us . . . ,” *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974* (Semiotext[e], 2004), 204–205; “H.M.'s Letters,” *Desert Islands*, 244–246;

- “Revolutionary Action: ‘Until Now,’” ELCP, 218–233; “The Masked Assassination,” in *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*, ed. Joy James (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 140–160; “On Attica,” EFL, 113–121; “Pompidou’s Two Deaths,” EEW2, 418–422; “The Force of Flight,” in *Space, Knowledge, and Power: Foucault and Geography*, ed. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 169–172; Gilles Deleuze, “Foucault and Prison,” *Two Regimes of Madness* (Semiotext(e), 2006), 271–281; Marcelo Hoffman, “Intolerable I: Investigation in 20 Prisons,” in *Foucault and Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 155–204.
27. FGIP-AL, FDE1, and FDE2. FGIP-AL is currently out of print.
 28. See “What Is an Author?,” ELCP, 113–138, and *Speech Begins after Death*, ed. Philippe Artières (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
 29. “Intellectuals and Power,” ELCP, 207–208, emphasis added.
 30. See Indigenous Action Media, “Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex,” May 4, 2014, <http://www.indigenouaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/>.
 31. See Foucault’s remarks in “Le grand enfermement,” 1174.
 32. See, for instance, Foucault, “Against Replacement Penalties,” EEW2, 459–61; Foucault, “Le grand enfermement,” 1164–1174; “Alternatives to the Prison: Dissemination or Decline of Social Control?” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.6 (2009): 12–24; “Pompidou’s Two Deaths,” EEW2, 418–22. Commenting on the legislative abolition of the death penalty in France in 1981, anti-death penalty attorney Robert Badinter recounts Foucault as stating, “Yeah, accomplishing [death penalty] abolition is pretty good but also easy; now the essential thing to do is get rid of prisons.” Quoted in Robert Nye, “Two Capital Punishment Debates in France: 1908 and 1981,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 29.2 (2003): 223n37.
 33. Foucault, “Préface,” 1063–1064.
 34. Foucault, “(Sur les prisons),” 1044.
 35. FGIP-I, 154.
 36. FGIP-I, 213.
 37. “Prisoners’ Demands,” Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity, April 3, 2011, <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/the-prisoners-demands-2/>. See also Keramet Reiter, “The Pelican Bay Hunger Strike: Resistance within the Structural Constraints of a US Supermax Prison,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113.3 (Summer 2014): 579–611.
 38. See Sarah Wheaton, “Inmates in Georgia Prisons Use Contraband Phones to Coordinate Protest,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2010; Sarah Wheaton, “Prisoners Strike in Georgia,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2010.
 39. Melvin Ray, “Free Alabama Movement” December 21, 2013, <http://freealabamamovement.com/FREE%20ALABAMA%20MOVEMENT.pdf>.
 40. Alex Altman, “Prison Hunger Strike Puts Spotlight on Immigration Detention,” *Time*, March 17, 2014, <http://time.com/276663/prison-hunger-strike-spotlights-on-immigration-detention/>; Tim Marcin, “Immigration Reform 2015: Women Reportedly on Hunger Strike in Texas Immigration Detention Center,” *International Business Times*, April 1, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/immigration-reform-2015-women-reportedly-hunger-strike-texas-immigration-detention-1866744>.
 41. On the GIP in relation to the post-1968 French left, see Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*, Part One, and Wolin, *The Wind from the East*, 288–349.

42. For more on the CAP, see Anne Guèrin, *Prisonniers en révolte*, and Christophe Soulié, *Liberté sur paroles: Contribution à l'histoire du Comité d'action des prisonniers* (Bordeaux: Editions Analis, 1995).
43. Loïc Delbaere, "Le système pénitentiaire à travers les luttes des détenus," *Maîtrise d'histoire*, 54.
44. Soulié, "La philosophie du CAP," *Liberté sur paroles*, 113–122.
45. *Le Journal du CAP 19* (July/August 1974), as quoted in Guèrin, 141.
46. Audrey Kiefer, *Michel Foucault: Le GIP, l'histoire et l'action* (Ph.D. diss., Université de Picardie Jules Verne d'Amiens, 2003), 91–92.
47. For a complete table of contents for every issues of *Le Journal du CAP*, see Archives Autonomies, "Sommaires du journal du CAP (1972–1980)," January 18, 2014, <http://archivesautonomies.org/spip.php?article116>.
48. On the demands of thinking with incarcerated thinkers, see especially Tom Kerr, "Writing with the Condemned: On Editing and Publishing the Work of Steve Champion," in *Demands of the Dead: Executions, Storytelling, and Activism in the United States*, ed. Katy Ryan (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 74–88; Joy James, *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005); Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Ryan, ed., *Demands of the Dead*; Eric Stanley and Nat Smith, eds., *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011).
49. The notion of "abolition-democracy" comes from W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, in which he identified a post–Civil War model of democratic theory and practice focused not simply on the "negative" abolition of chattel slavery, but on its "positive" abolition. For applications of Du Bois's insight in critical race theory and prison abolition, see Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) and Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).
50. Such an approach can be found at the intersection of anti-racist and trans* liberation movements. See CR-10 Publications Collective, ed., *Abolition Now! 10 Years of Strategy and Struggle against the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008); Stanley and Smith, *Captive Genders*; Elias Walker Vitulli, "Queering the Carceral: Intersecting Queer/Trans Studies and Critical Prison Studies," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19.1 (2012): 111–123; Ryan Conrad, ed., *Prisons Will Not Protect You* (Lewiston: Against Equality Publishing Collective, 2012); Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law*; Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Liat Ben-Moshe, Che Gossett, Nick Mitchell, and Eric A. Stanley, "Critical Theory, Queer Resistance, and the Ends of Capture," *Death and Other Penalties: Philosophy in a Time of Mass Incarceration*, ed. Geoffrey Adelsberg, Lisa Guenther, and Scott Zeman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 266–295.
51. GIP, "Préface," 1063.
52. Foucault, "Revolutionary Action Until Now," 227 (emphasis in the original).
53. See the introduction to Sarah Tyson and Joshua Hall, *Philosophy Imprisoned: The Love of Wisdom in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

54. Andre Pierce, "Organizing Dead Matter into Effective Energy," *Philosophy Imprisoned*, 247.
55. For important works that center the voices of incarcerated persons see also Joy James, ed. *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2003); Joy James, ed., *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005); Stanley and Smith, eds. *Captive Genders*; Adelsberg, Guenther, and Zeman, eds. *Death and Other Penalties*; Ayelet Waldman and Robin Levi, eds. *Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons* (San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2011). For more prison writings, especially those by currently or formerly incarcerated persons, see the bibliography from the Prison and Theory Working Group at <http://ptwg.org/prisonwritings/>.