Session 404, Preserving the Spark: Challenges in Archiving Activist Movements

Opening provocations
Answer yes (green card), maybe/sometimes (yellow card), or no (red card) to the following statements related to community activism and archives:
1. I have connections with an individual activist or activist groups within my organization or community
2. I know how to advocate for an activist or activists group documentation project
3. My organization would give me resources to support an activist documentation project
4. I have the cultural competency to document activist groups in or around my organization or community
5. I am actively engaging in the decolonization of archives and archivists
6. It is my responsibility to ensure activism is adequately included in the archival record
7. I feel capable of capturing voices that might actively make current members of my community and/or institution uncomfortable
8. I feel comfortable with complex projects in which living contributors are actively involved in how they are being represented

Group discussion guidelines
• Please break into circles of 6-8
• Each circle will take ownership of itself, like a small unconference
• We ask one person in each circle to volunteer to take notes – but of course participants can go off the record
• Session leaders are roving around, listening, contributing, answering questions
• We encourage you to move beyond descriptions, using prompts to dig into personal, professional, institutional struggles
• We would love groups to collate their notes, share with each other, help grow this community

Group discussion prompts
• Describe an institutional roadblock you face or have faced in documenting activism.
• Describe a professional roadblock you face or have faced in documenting activism.
• Describe a personal roadblock you face or have faced in documenting activism.
• What are you afraid of? What could or has gone wrong in your efforts, institutionally, professionally or personally?
• What strategies have you used to engage the roadblock or fear you described?
• What is an example of a strategy that proved successful?
• What is an example of a strategy that was less successful?
What’s next?
Take five minutes to put your thoughts on paper:
• Questions that linger or went unasked
• Conversation points you didn’t get to make
• Words or topics not fully understood
• Reactions to others’ comments, agree or disagree
• Topics to research or read more about
• Points that you loved
• Points that bugged you
• What did you learn today that can guide research, conversations, actions moving forward?