

## **Scholars Roundtable: Engaged Scholarship Journey and Innovations with Professor Bernadette Atuahene**

Professor Bernadette Atuahene, American Law Professor and writer, encouraged academics to make their work personal, saying that there is great power in individualising a problem. She was speaking at the Wits School of Governance Roundtable on Engaged Scholarship Journey and Innovations on 18 July 2024.

Professor Atuahene said that by presenting an issue on a personal level, academics can make their findings more impactful and relatable.

The Roundtable co-hosted by the Tayarisha Research Group explored ideas about how to centre scholarly identities and explore different pedagogic approaches between academia and activism.

This Roundtable coincided with celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Professor Atuahene's first book, [\*We Want What's Ours\*](#). *Professor Atuahene is the Frances and John Duggan Chair at the University of Southern California (USC) Gould School of Law. She is a property law scholar focusing on land stolen from people in the African Diaspora. She is currently the Executive Director of the Institute for Law and Organizing.*

The talk also explored what engaged scholarship provides and requires; and how institutional space can be evolved to provide the kinds of educational experiences that are necessary for our times.

Professor Atuahene shared her work on the [Illegally Inflated Property Taxes in Detroit](#).

“Since 2009, the City of Detroit has illegally over assessed property values and inflated its property tax bills. She explained that when homeowners cannot afford to pay, Wayne County forecloses on their home and despite efforts to address the problem, the City continues to illegally and inequitably tax Detroiters, especially those who own lower-valued homes,” she said.

she stressed the importance of **changing the narrative** from that of personal irresponsibility to that of structural injustice. “This shift highlights the systemic issues that underpin many societal problems, moving the focus from blaming individuals to addressing broader, more entrenched inequities,” she said.

Professor Atuahene advised that **those that are close to the problem, are close to the solution**. She explained that proximity to the issue allows for a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities involved, leading to more effective and practical solutions. “Engaging with communities and individuals directly affected by the issues can provide invaluable perspectives and innovative approaches,” she added.

Read more: <https://bernadetteatuahene.com/>