

Avalon Betts-Gaston is a wife, mother, daughter, Chicago native, non-licensed attorney, ordained minister, and passionate advocate to dismantle, change and build a legal system focused on healing-centered justice including harm reduction and prevention, not punishment and retribution. Avalon made her public debut as an advocate at young age when she convinced her fellow Congressional pages to protest apartheid outside of the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. This passion against various societal injustices continued throughout her life and was extra-charged and focused on the criminal legal system after she was wrongfully convicted in 2015.

Avalon received her bachelor's degree from DePaul University and her JD from John Marshall Law School in Chicago. She is the Executive Director of the Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice and the first known formerly incarcerated Board Chairperson for the 140-year-old faith-based organization, Community Renewal Society. Avalon is a 2023 Soros Justice Fellow, a 2022 JLUSA Leading with Conviction Fellow, and currently serves on the FreeHer Campaign Advisory Council, as well as the boards of Chicago Votes, Giving Others Dreams, and Challenge II Change.