Adelitas: Women & Femmes of Courage is a writing intensive art program, engaging high schoolers with a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ histories, the poetic foundations of remembering and the agency to make history themselves.

This course begins with the story of the Adelitas of the Mexican Revolution. The Adelitas were female assigned citizens who dared to cross boundaries of gender and society to fight for justice by becoming leaders on the front lines of the revolution. While many Adelitas were women, some presented and identified as men for their entire lives after winning the revolution. This course adopts these revolutionaries and their stories as a lens to examine how the struggles and contributions of other LGBTQ+ figures across North American history have carved a path toward justice and equality.

Through engaging in poetic and artistic practices, visiting culturally significant sites around the city and interviewing contemporary LGBTQ+ community leaders, students will ask questions like, what creates cultural memory? And how does my voice make a difference in a world with so many voices? These experiences will culminate in the creation of a multi-media project. Students will blend their poetry and visual art work into a single product which engages an influential individual with a transgressive experience of gender or sexuality, who has contributed to creating a more just and equitable society.

This course is currently being lead at both Whitney Young Magnet High School and Lane Tech College Prep High School by teaching artists Cynthium Johnson-Woodfolk, Robin Reid Drake and Adelitas program founder, Diana Solís.

Diana is a locally and nationally renowned visual arts teaching artist born in Nuevo León, Monterrey, México and raised in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood. For over 30 years, Diana has produced and exhibited visual artwork throughout Chicago in various galleries, alternative spaces, and museums. Her work reflects her participation in and observation of the Mexican, women’s, and LGBTQ communities, and activism in Chicago. Her practice includes large-scale public murals, painting, illustration, printmaking, and found object sculptural construction; she is well-known for her abstract and figurative line work that often features fantastical creatures. Diana has been an active teaching artist for Changing Worlds since 2011.

Cynthium is an educator and writer with over 15 years of experience in managing and teaching arts-integrated strategies and practicums to enhance school-wide curricula, enrich students learning experience, and create arts rich in-school environments. Cynthium received both her MA and MFA in Creative Writing and the Teaching of Creative Writing at Columbia College. She is a recipient of the Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Orchid Award for Performing Arts, and a three-time finalist for the Excellence in Teaching Award for Fiction Writing.

Robin Reid is an emerging poet and educator who works with young people around subjects of queer and trans identity, history, power and poetry. A new addition to the Changing Worlds family, they hold an MFA in Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BA in Creative Writing & Africana Studies from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Robin Reid attended SAIC as a New Artists Society Scholar and taught in the Early College Program. They have served as a judge for the Gwendolyn Brooks Youth Poetry Awards and are a 2019 recipient of the Ragdale Foundation Residency.