

# Washington State University

## College of Education

### Felix Braffith

Will defend the dissertation on

Date: February 9, 2024

Time: Noon

Vancouver Campus – VUB 311

Zoom available upon request to [gradstudies@wsu.edu](mailto:gradstudies@wsu.edu)

*Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend*

## **BREATHING STORIES 2 LIFE: COUNTERNARRATIVES OF FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATES OF COLOR**

Chair: Katherine Rodela

This qualitative study explores the experiences of first-generation college graduates of color who participated in the Upward Bound program from 2008 to 2012. Analyzing both their experiences as participants and alumni, the research interprets their collective journey, highlighting the program's deliberate educational approaches that challenge deficit narratives. Utilizing the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory and the conceptual framework of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), identified themes offer essential insights for TRIO programs, educators, policymakers, researchers, and administrators in higher education. The study advocates for Upward Bound leaders to adopt an Applied Critical Leadership (ACL) approach, emphasizing critical analysis and cultural responsiveness. Alumni narratives echo commitment across generations, illustrating the program's impact in breaking systemic barriers and advancing equity. In alignment with Tupac Shakur's "The Rose that Grew from Concrete," the Upward Bound program nurtures students' cultural wealth, facilitating success amidst challenges. This research contributes valuable perspectives to the broader understanding of the strengths and resilience of first-generation college graduates of color in educational settings.