



Nailed It!: Quetzal Mama's Toolkit for Extraordinary College Essays

Roxanne Ocampo

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Students get one shot to tell their story to the admissions readers. Will the student nail it? Or, will the essay be like the majority of essays filtered through admissions: uninspiring, boring, and lackluster? Unfortunately, many students approach their essays unsuccessfully by underselling their story, failing to notice common errors, or missing the mark altogether. Not anymore. In this one-of-a-kind book, Quetzal Mama shares her tips, strategies, and secrets to help students nail the college essay. Students will see first-hand examples of how to pick the right prompt, how to effectively market their profile, how best to articulate unique qualities, and how to avoid some common mistakes. This book is unique compared to other essay writing books for three reasons. First, the top-selling books on college essays predominantly feature stories and experiences of middle to high income students, from privileged backgrounds, who do not belong to an historically underrepresented minority group. This book focuses exclusively on the unique cultural and sociopolitical implications of historically underrepresented students. Second, the content includes culturally-relevant theoretical models and strategies including frameworks such as Los Huesos, the Ganas Principle, the TIN CASA rubric, and “The Personal Statement is like a Taco de Carne Asada.” Lastly, students will read actual essays from other students across the US who used Quetzal Mama’s methods to obtain admission to selective colleges like Harvard, Stanford, and Berkeley. This book contains Quetzal Mama’s essay writing expertise gained from working with thousands of high school students over the last five years. Quetzal Mama uses humor to engage students, and writes in a “motherly” tone that “keeps it real.” She gets right to the point, without sugar-coating the realities of selective college admissions.

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