Why Parents Should Butt Out of College Essays

The college admissions race becomes increasingly competitive more and more attention is being paid to the personal statement that's the couple hundred word essay that's a central piece of most college applications but much of the advice that students receive about how to approach this essay and how to write it is wrong or at least misguided that's according to Lacey Crawford our guest for 15 years Lacey served as an independent college applications advisor Lacey let's talk about how we got to this point what is it about college admissions that will leave parents to pay folks like you $20.00 a word to help their children write these essays well I should say that I was offered $20 a word to writing an essay fast orderessay.net. I never would have accepted that that was an extreme example how did we get here I think I think college applications college admissions are really a perfect storm for parents and students it is in some ways the culmination of all of a parent's educational ambition for their child is where they're admitted to college it's also the last time that parents really have a chance to help their children make big decisions about the world before the child is off to college so right at the moment when independence is beckoning just before the empty nest is this last minute dark frenzy that happens senior fall and people get paralyzed they feel paralyzed and often they turn outside for health.

I was one of the people they would call for that help and you've said as a result of all of this pressure and these you know competing desires that the result is well-meaning adults will will hijack students voices what do you mean by that really wonderful bright parents who have wonderful bright children will ask politely or nag to read the drafts of the college essays and when they finally do they see a 17 year-old's essay and they think oh we've got to make this better you know Harvard's admit rate is at 5.7 percent this year this has to be we have to hit it out of the park with this we have to make you sound as exceptional as I know you are the problem is they then tweak or rewrite or add a couple phrases or hire someone else to do that or as was the case with me just take out a checkbook and offer a very large amount of money to have the whole thing drafted from scratch the experience of this to a young person is of being told that what you have to say about yourself because the questions that colleges ask for the common application which is the four most kids use the questions they ask are really about a young person's growing interests and their scholarly ambitions what they hope to do in college what they hope to do outside of school and after school to have a parent say yeah I like what you've said but it's not good enough why don't we use my words instead that's a really annihilating thing for a young person and it happens not with any ill intention over and over and over again every year let's talk about how we can avoid this what advice do you have for seniors sitting down to write these essays what should they be paying attention.

I would say don't be afraid of your own voice I think there's a fantasy that in order to get into college one has to be oh the best community service volunteer in the history of the world one has to win a westinghouse one has to master five languages have seven aps all of these things it is certainly true that college admissions are very very competitive but college admissions officers the people who are reading these applications they're not fools they can tell the difference between a 35 year old with a master's in english is writing someone else's essay and a really bright and curious 17 year olds they don't want to admit a 35 year old tutor they want a really curious ready to work ready to study ready to explore young person that's what college is all about whenever I've had young people achieve success with their applications and that happened far more often than not it was when the essay was written in a really independent voice a brave and bold an authentic story or opinion now of course it's important to have people help with proofreading it punctuation matters grammar matters all of these things do but that's no surprise what's most important is to make sure that the young person's voice really comes through and is authentically him or herself well be sure to check out Lacey's essay on college essays in this weekend's review section her book is early decision based on a true frenzy out August 27th Lacey thank you so much for joining us thank you so much for having me.