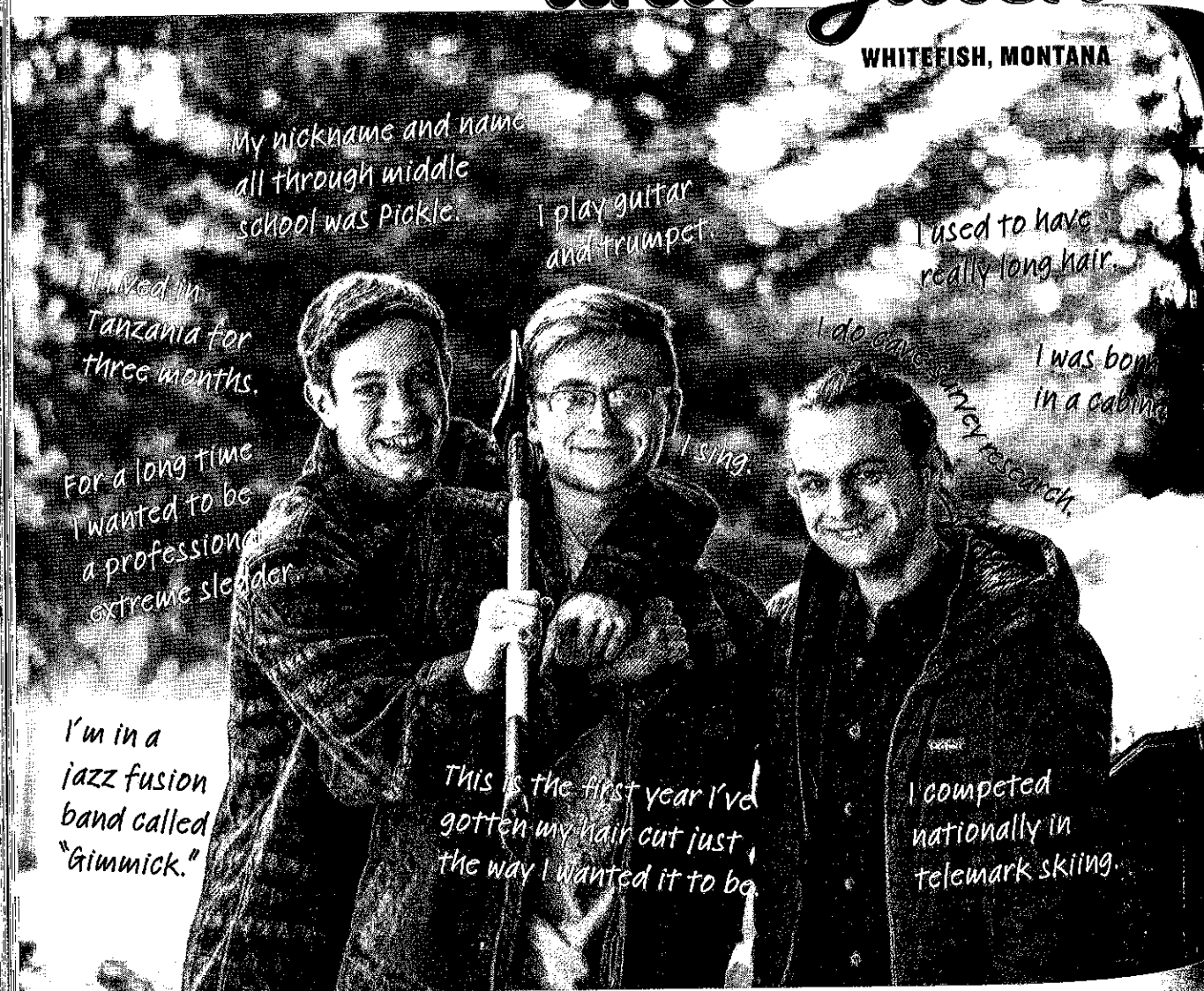


# Eric, Josiah, and Galen

WHITEFISH, MONTANA



My nickname and name all through middle school was Pickle.

I play guitar and trumpet.

I used to have really long hair.

I lived in Tanzania for three months.

For a long time I wanted to be a professional extreme sledder.

I do some gene research.

I was born in a cabin.

I sing.

I'm in a jazz fusion band called "Gimmick."

This is the first year I've gotten my hair cut just the way I wanted it to be.

I competed nationally in telemark skiing.

**Eric:** I've lived in Whitefish, Montana, my whole life. It's 96.5 percent White. I love when I go to Seattle and I see people that aren't White, it makes me very excited. When I travel and go to an airport, and I see a person of color, I do find myself staring a lot. Mainly out of just, like, I don't know, curiosity. At our school there's one African-American kid this year, and he really stands out.

**Galen:** I was born in North Fork, in a cabin. As Eric already said, this area is not known for its racial diversity, but the one piece of racial diversity that affected my early life would be that of Native Americans. With all the racial ignorance that I have, the one thing that I can claim is that I have this little bit of indigenous knowledge. My parents have a lot of connections to Native Americans. My birth was actually blessed with a traditional Native American ceremony. Recently, my father had to go through some cancer surgeries and one of his friends performed a Native American ceremony where they try to release the toxins from an individual.

I'd not really encountered much beyond that, though. My junior year I decided to take an exchange year to Norway. It's a country full of White people with blond hair and blue eyes, but recently due to geopolitical issues there's been a lot of

immigration to Norway. I remember at one point sitting with my host family, and my host mother was a very, very kind person, and generally was actually very liberal, but she was talking about how she was so disappointed that all these immigrants were coming to Norway and taking up places at universities. It was really awkward because I was sitting there as someone who was planning to immigrate to Norway, who was planning to go to university there and I was saying, "Why do you think that?" She realized her mistake and said, "Well I wasn't talking about *you*." In that moment I realized that "you" was White people.

**Josiah:** I'm not like these two, I've never been outside of the country, and I've spent most of my life in Whitefish. I have only been mildly affected by it, I have a very nonracist\* opinion toward other cultures. The happenings that have been going on in Whitefish with the

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\* Consider the language of "nonracist" versus "antiracist": To be nonracist implies passiveness (which can include being a bystander), while "antiracist" implies actively fighting against racism. If you're privileged and passive, you're still part of the problem because you remain a beneficiary of an oppressive system.

neo-Nazi\*\* mishaps were really surprising to me when they happened. I didn't realize that we had such a racist group of people in our population. I feel like we've got a bad brand sticker on our town now because of it.

**Galen:** When I was an exchange student in Norway, all this business with the neo-Nazis was going on. It was so weird watching it from abroad. I was sitting in my room and my host family came up and they said, "Your town is in our Norwegian print newspaper!" I was sure they misread it or something, because our town is so small. And they said, "No, look here, neo-Nazis invade Whitefish, Montana!" My hosts were disappointed because, you know, their country was invaded by Nazis.

**Eric:** We talked about it a lot in our classroom at school. Richard Spencer

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**\*\* Richard Spencer, a well-known White supremacist, is a part-time resident of Whitefish, Montana. The Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi website, promised a 200-person anti-Semitic march in Whitefish on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which never actually happened. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, 954 hate groups are still active all across the United States.**

wanted to start up a White supremacist utopia here essentially, and he pretty much created a nationwide thing in just this small town.

**Galen:** I feel like that's the terrifying thing—Whitefish is not special. We don't have an exorbitant amount of White supremacists, but yet, Richard Spencer was able to come here and make an army of White supremacists. I think honestly he could've done that in just about any small town in the United States, and, I don't know, that's to me really the terrifying thing. The ability of it to be re-created is really possible.

**Josiah:** I'm a Christian. I should love everyone and not distinguish any real difference between them and treat everyone with respect. Personally, in our schools, we have a very, very positive environment where everyone is treated equally. It's easy to say, since we're all generally White, but I still think that even if we had more diversity in our school, we would still treat people the same.

**Eric:** I don't think Josiah's wrong at all. There was a student here a few years ago, who moved away my sophomore year, and his father was Black and everyone liked him. He won this award in our eighth grade class for being a really cool person, and I

think it shows we have a lot of respect in Whitefish for different cultures.

**Galen:** I really agree with that, but I think even the respect you were talking about to the few students of color wasn't even proper respect. Because they were, like, the token minority. At least that's what I saw—people were basing their respect for those people not on the fact that

they were really awesome people and really interesting individuals who had powerful personalities, but on the fact that they felt like they needed to be racially savvy.

**Eric:** Right.

**Galen:** I think that even that type of "respect" can be really ingenuine sometimes.