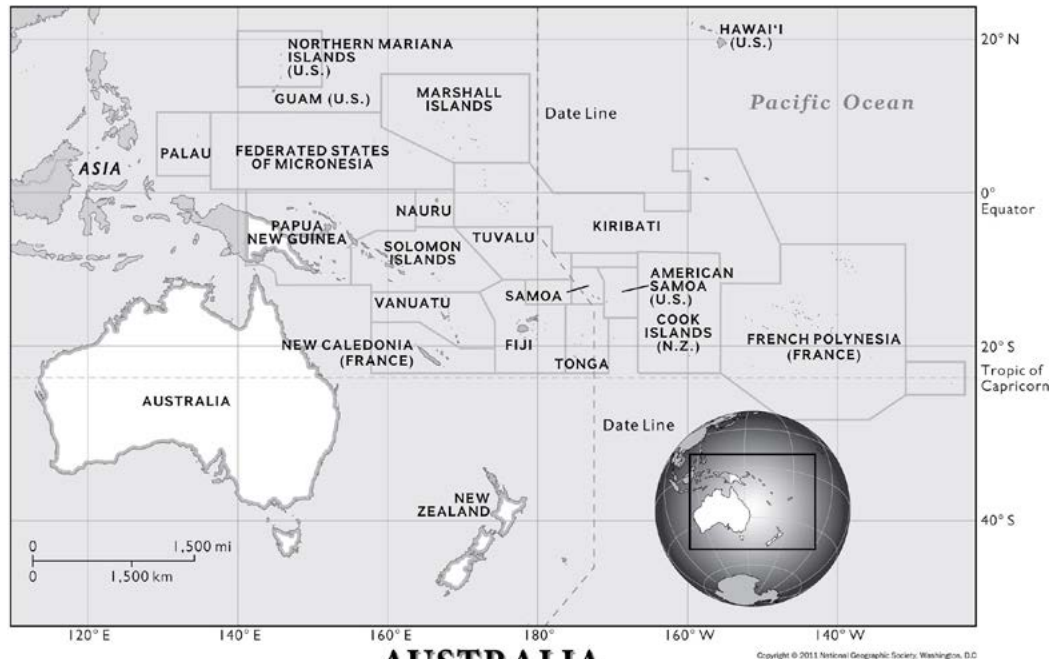


# Oceania

## Which countries are in Oceania?

Oceania is made up of over 10,000 islands, mostly in the Pacific Ocean.

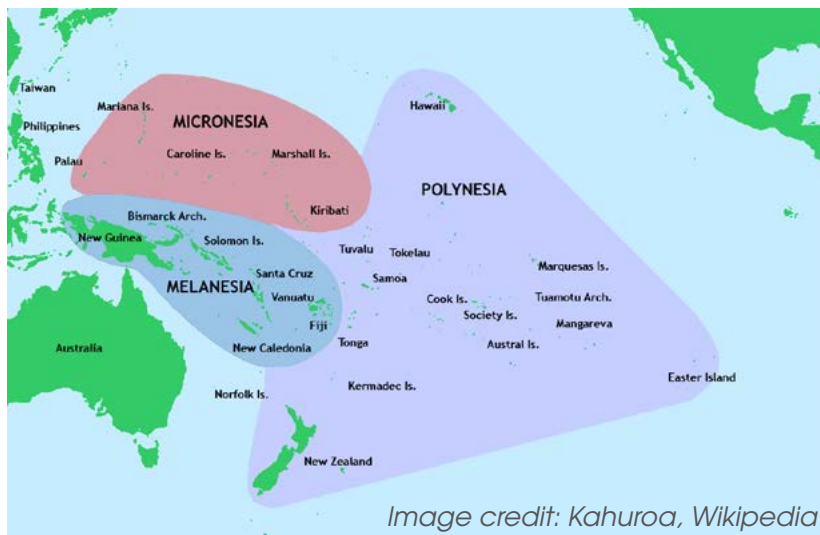
As you can see in this map, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand are by far the biggest countries in Oceania. There are many smaller countries, states and territories, such as Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji. The smallest independent country is Nauru, which is only 8.1 square miles!



**AUSTRALIA and Oceania**

*Image credit: National Geographic*

This map shows three different culturally distinct groupings of islands: Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Together these are often referred to as the Pacific Islands. These islands were all previously colonised by other larger countries including the UK, USA, Japan, and France.



*Image credit: Kahuroa, Wikipedia*

You may have predicted from the name 'Oceania' that the ocean is incredibly important to the people who live in these nations. Many Pacific Islanders rely on the ocean, and live in harmony with it. The effects that climate change is having on the oceans are therefore having a direct impact on the people who live there.

## Why are the Pacific Islands already severely affected by climate change?

There are several ways that the Pacific Islands are being affected by climate change, but one of the clearest impacts is the result of rising sea levels.

Sea levels are rising for two main reasons:

1. The oceans are expanding as they get warmer.
2. More liquid water is pouring into the oceans as the polar ice caps melt.

As the sea rises, coastlines are flooded and submerged underwater. For island nations, this can mean a lot of damage can be done to communities - for example, people may have to leave their homes or they may struggle to do their jobs.

Some areas in Micronesia have already been lost to rising sea levels - aerial images show that six small uninhabited islands were fully submerged in between 2007 and 2014, according to researchers at universities in Australia. It is only a matter of time until this starts happening to more islands which are inhabited by people.

## What about Australia and New Zealand?

Many areas in Australia already experienced very high temperatures, but they are creeping even higher. Australia also already experienced unreliable patterns of rainfall, and levels are simply becoming even more unpredictable. This is making the country more prone to heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and floods (because when the rain does come, it's more intense).

Most people in Australia live on the coasts which, like the Pacific Islands, will be affected by rising sea levels. Many people also rely on money generated by tourism as people come to visit areas such as the Great Barrier Reef, but this - along with other ecosystems - is in danger of being damaged by increasing ocean temperatures. In fact, in June 2021, the UN stated that the Great Barrier Reef should be listed as being 'in danger' due to being damaged by temperatures and pollution resulting from climate change.



*The Great Barrier Reef is a World Heritage Site, meaning it has great scientific and cultural significance.*

*Image credit: Pixabay*

However, as of August 2021, the Australian government has still not pledged to attempt to go 'net zero' - balancing the production of greenhouse gas emissions with sustainable energy emissions - by 2050. Many scientists and governments are saying that Australia is not doing enough to tackle climate change and have criticised the prime minister, Scott Morrison, for not taking climate change seriously.



New Zealand's government is doing more to combat climate change. In December 2020 they declared climate change an 'emergency' and prime minister Jacinda Ardern called it "one of the greatest challenges of our time".



*In 2019 Jacinda Ardern spoke with the World Economic Forum about the dangers of climate change.  
Credit: @wef, Twitter*

Like Australia, New Zealand is experiencing more wildfires. Additionally, as with the Pacific Islands, sea levels are expected to rise and damage areas significantly - approximately two-thirds of communities living in New Zealand live within 5km of the coast. Flooding is expected to get much more common which will have significant consequences for much of the population.

New Zealand also has more than 3000 glaciers, which have shrunk in volume by a third over the past 40 years. This is causing problems for farmers in the areas as water melts and floods into their land, as well as affecting plant and animal life that live in those areas.

Both Australia and New Zealand have experienced negative impacts as a result of climate change, and are predicted to be hit hard in future if climate change is not addressed properly. However, they are the two most industrialised countries in Oceania. As a result, they are better equipped to deal with the potential impacts of climate change than many of the smaller nations.

# Litokne Kabua



Image credit: Heirs to Our Oceans

Litokne Kabua lives in the Marshall Islands, part of Micronesia. His family historically relied on fishing to make money and provide food, but with the increasing temperatures, it has become harder for them to catch fish and sustain themselves. Litokne is one of the 16 young people involved in [#ChildrenVsClimateCrisis](#), a petition against the UN to hold countries to account to make them fight back against climate change. You can learn more about it by going to the [#ChildrenVsClimateCrisis](#) section in this booklet.

Litokne is personally affected by rising sea levels because it is impacting his way of life already. The Marshall Islands are made up of 29 atolls - a type of island made up of coral, which surrounds a lagoon - and 5 islands. Each of them are low-lying - only about 7 feet above sea level. It won't take long for oceans to rise and swallow many of these areas up. It also means they are very vulnerable to stormy seas - a big wave can easily be more than 7 feet tall.

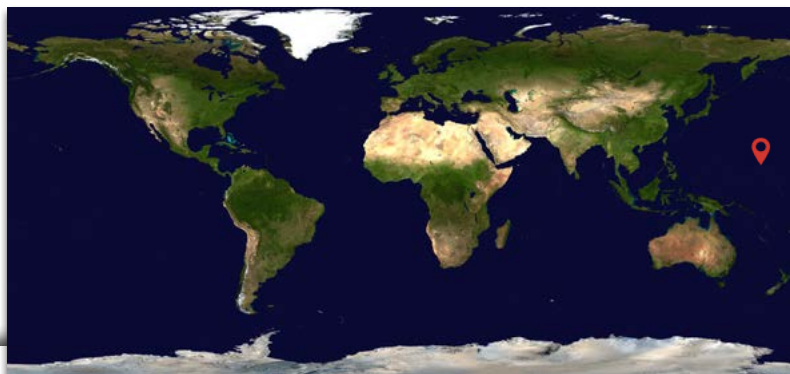
The increasing temperature of the oceans is also damaging the coral that makes up the atolls. Coral is alive, but cannot survive if the water gets too warm. Many fish rely on food that lives in and around coral reefs, so if the coral starts to die, these fish won't have food supplies, meaning the fish populations fall too. This is putting fishing families, like Litokne's, at risk of losing food supplies and jobs.

The Marshall Islands are also experiencing more extreme weather, such as typhoons and droughts. Stormy weather causes damage to buildings and communities and droughts have caused water shortages (because they cannot drink the salty ocean water that surrounds their islands, so they still rely on rainfall to ensure a supply of clean drinking water).



Majuro Atoll is an example of a large coral atoll in the Marshall Islands. It is home to over 25,000 people.

Image credit: Christopher Michel



Born  
**2003/4**

More info:

- [Video: Why climate activism is important](#)
- [Okeanos Foundation](#)



# Carlos Manuel

Carlos Manuel lives in Palau, which is also part of Micronesia. It lies to the east of the Philippines, where Carlos spent his childhood. Carlos is another member of [#ChildrenVsClimateCrisis](#) and visited the UN's headquarters in 2019 to urge adults in power to take action and help countries like Palau to survive the worsening effects of climate change.

When addressing the UN, Carlos stated that Palauan people are being forced from their homes due to rising sea levels and severe weather damage. Memories and cultures are also at risk:



*Image credit: rnz.co.nz*

**"Losing a home is not that easy, especially if your ancestors have lived there for hundreds of years. Our future depends on them, so I'm asking that our leaders must act now, while we still have an island to live in, because I don't want our island to disappear and be swallowed up by the ocean. We're islanders and we depend on our island."**



*Koror City, the largest city in Palau.  
Image credit: Jean-Bernard Carillet, Lonely Planet*

Palau is also becoming increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather. Typhoons - tropical storms - are common in nearby countries like the Philippines, but typically Palau is not often hit by them. However, it was hit badly in 2013 by Supertyphoon Haiyan, and in April 2021 it was struck by Supertyphoon Surigae, though it didn't make many headlines in the western world. Winds blowing up to

speeds of 84mph swept the island. Water, electricity and mobile phone networks were down for a few days and 125 homes were destroyed; damage across Palau was around £3,500,000.

Nobody in Palau was killed, but there were ten deaths in the Philippines. With climate change causing extreme weather events like typhoons to become more common, there will be a higher and higher risk of people not surviving storms like this in future.

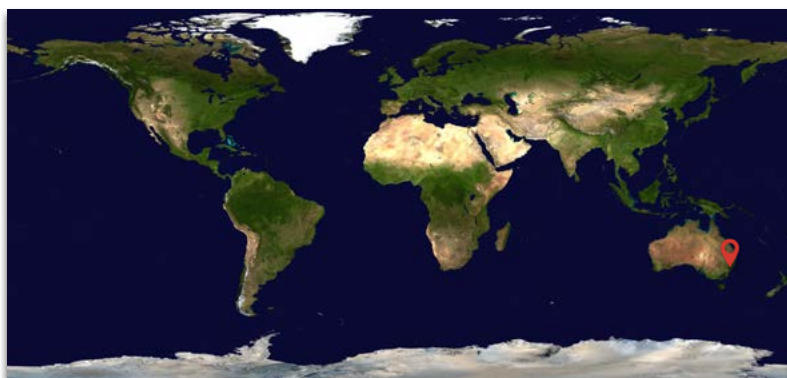
You can see some footage of the strong winds filmed by Palauans as Supertyphoon Surigae hit the country [here](#).

Born  
**2001/2**



## Jean Hinchliffe

Jean is an Australian climate activist who campaigns against the continued use of fossil fuels, and for Australia to become carbon-neutral. In 2015 she attended the UN Climate Summit in New York after having organised youth climate strikes at her high school in Sydney. As a child, she was exposed to a lot of news about the impact of climate change on Australia's environment:



**“I mean I’ve spent my life growing up surrounded by this constant news of polar ice caps melting and the Great Barrier Reef dying and animals losing their homes and bushfires and floods. And that’s been really scary for me growing up, knowing that this is my future.”**

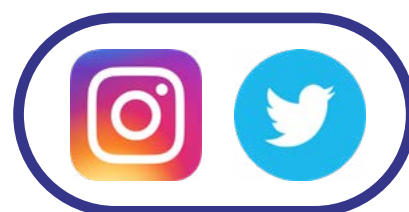
Jean describes herself as passionate about teaching and educating other people about climate action, as well as an activist fighting for change. After prime minister Scott Morrison said on TV that he disapproved of the School Strike for Climate movement, there was a large pushback from teenagers across the country to show that it was a topic they were passionate about, and the Fridays for Future movement began to grow rapidly.



Image credit: Twitter @jean\_hinchliffe

Talking on the ChangeMakers podcast, which you can listen to [here](#), Jean says that it’s hard to exist knowing the threat of climate change is there, but that she feels less anxious about it when she campaigns because she knows she is doing everything she can to tackle it. However, there have been frustrating moments: for example, she has had opportunities to meet politicians to discuss how to tackle climate change. She found that many of them were not at all open to being convinced of the severity of the problem and treated her in a condescending way. It made it clear to her that you have to really stand your ground to fight for what you believe in, even when people aren’t listening to you or taking you seriously.

In 2021, Jean released a book titled *‘Lead the Way: How to change the world from a teen activist and school striker’*. It’s a guidebook for young people to advise them on ways to create change through activism, with tips on how to organise demonstrations and public speaking. Its message is that young people are already leading the way to a better future - and you can be part of it.



More info:

- [Time Out Interview](#)

Born  
**2004**



# Climate Justice and Colonialism



*Image credit: Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign*

## What is climate justice?

When we think about the climate, we often think about it as part of our physical environment and the patterns of weather over time. However, climate change affects people in ethical and political ways too. For example, climate change causes events such as droughts, desertification and flooding, which governments then have to try and recover from, spending a lot of money to fix the damage and on preventing it from happening again.

It is important to realise that when these damaging events occur a lot in some places and not others, it means some people are affected really badly by climate change, and other people not so much. In other words, we don't all feel the effects of climate change equally.

That is what we mean by climate justice:

**Some people are affected by climate change much more severely than others, and it is not just, fair or reasonable.**

## The Global North and Global South

Many of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are in the Global South. The Global South refers to developing countries, many of which are in southern areas of the planet. They are home to large communities of people of colour. The Global North is made up of wealthier countries which are mostly in the northern hemisphere. It is home to a higher proportion of white populations.

It is important to point out that the concept of the Global North and South is not as simple as a line drawn between parts of the world. Many developing countries are experiencing rapid social and economic development, and many developed countries are seeing large wealth inequalities. The differences are complex and maps showing the divide can vary. Overall, however, there is still a stark difference in wealth between many countries in the Global North and South.



*Average GDP in 2010: The countries in blue have economies that are above the world average GDP (a measure of their wealth). The countries in orange have GDPs below the world average. You can see that many (though not all) of the wealthier countries are in the north.*

*Image credit: - International Monetary Fund*

Countries in the Global South have generally contributed a lot less to climate change than countries in the Global North, but they are experiencing more regular and dangerous consequences. This is an example of climate injustice: communities there are more exposed to the hazards of climate change through no fault of their own.

In fact, research suggests that the Global North has produced 92% of the greenhouse gases that have contributed to climate change, whereas the Global South has produced only 8%!

Lots of activists recognise that this is unfair and they are fighting for climate justice. They are also declaring climate change as a racial issue, because it is disproportionately affecting people of colour.

To learn more about climate justice, you can watch the video ->



## The history of climate change

Why are communities of colour and countries in the Global South more likely to feel the hazardous effects of climate change? To answer this, let's think about when climate change first started to occur.

We talk regularly about how human contributions to climate change started with the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s, or with the invention of cars and planes. These things have all contributed to the issue, because they require the burning of fossil fuels, which produces greenhouse gases.

However, widespread damage to the environment has been occurring in some parts of the world for centuries, long before the Industrial Revolution. This leaves these parts of the world particularly vulnerable to climate change today. This is in large part due to colonialism. The 1500s was the era of the beginning of modern colonialism.

## Colonialism

Colonialism is defined as:

**'the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically'**

In other words, colonialism is when one country has part or total control of another country. Large colonial empires from history include the British, French, Dutch, and Japanese empires. At the time, nations justified conquering other countries by claiming they were "barbaric" or "savage" and that they could make them civilised.



Let's look at the British Empire as an example.



*This map shows the British Empire 100 years ago. It also previously ruled over other areas not shown in this map, such as parts of the United States before they declared independence.  
Image credit: Maps on the Web*

Beginning in the 1500s, Great Britain was one of the countries which ruled and controlled over many other countries in the world as part of the British Empire. It used this power to make a lot of money. This also caused a lot of damage to the land and to native communities. Some areas Great Britain ruled over include North America, India and large swathes of Africa. As recently as 1913, the British Empire ruled over a **quarter of the world's population**.

When Britain was colonising other parts of the world, they forced nations to give up their natural resources, like sugar, tobacco, bananas, cotton, and much more. They used slave labour to maintain the plantations where these natural resources were farmed. This was called a slave trade. A slave trade is where people from the colony countries were captured, transported, and sold to other countries. British colonists paid workers little to no money, and exploited the land for resources. They would then sell these resources to other countries for higher prices and make huge profits.

But what does this history of colonialism have to do with climate change? Well, when resources from developing countries are easily accessible and cheap, lots of people can take advantage of that situation by overusing the resources and selling as much as they can to make money. This is called overconsumption and many richer countries still do this today.



*A photograph of shelves in a US supermarket  
Image credit: Wikimedia Commons.*

The Global North is made up of a lot of developed countries which import goods from the Global South but don't always pay them a lot of money. This leads to people in the Global South being exploited and the natural environment being damaged. For example, land may be overgrazed by cattle, or extensively mined for metals and fossil fuels. As the environment is already damaged, the effects of climate change experienced by communities there can then be worse.

If you would like to learn more about how colonialism is linked to the environment and climate change, you can download a resource all about it here:

**Resource 6 – Geography**

# What are the links between colonialism and the environment?



**Key stage 3**

**Creative thinking habit – Inquisitive**  
 Problem based learning, exploring and investigating, challenging assumptions, and questioning  
 Inquisitive prompts, questions and class discussion marked in pink.

**reset**  
**Teaching for creativity**  
 Supporting teachers to develop young people's creativity through a broad and diverse curriculum

**A NEW DIRECTION**  
 We create opportunity

One major effect of colonialism has been that many people of colour and communities on the frontlines of the threats of climate change have not had their voices heard. Below are three activists who are fighting to change this.



## Lola Fayokun



Image credit: The Earth Issue

Lola is a climate activist and campaigner from London. Active in the UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN) and involved with other events such as EU Green Week and Youth COP, Lola is an advocate for the decolonisation of environmental and climate education.

She first got involved with climate activism through youth climate strikes and is vocal about their importance in making young people's voices heard, and pushing for change in systems and policies that currently do not work. This is especially important in ensuring marginalised communities are not hit hard by the effects of the climate crisis.

Lola also recognises that the climate change movement could and should be more diverse, and while it is important to act to make a difference in the fight against climate change, time needs to be made to think about diversity, the Global South, equality and fairness. It is also essential to recognise the different skills and abilities that people can bring to the cause in order to ensure everyone is fighting for a fair future.

Speaking to The Earth Issue, Lola said:

*"I would advise young climate activists to not be intimidated by those who claim that we're just being naive or overcatastrophising. The system that we currently have puts profit before people. Those who benefit from that don't want us to rethink the current system and propose just solutions. But our planet is on the line and society's most marginalised are already being hit hard by compounding crises. It's important that we do what we can - not just as individuals, but in community - to fight for a better future, and that we continue to have hope in the possibility of radical change."*



More info:

- [Interview with The Earth Issue](#)

Born  
2001/2



## Aryaana Khan

Aryaana Khan was born and raised in Bangladesh. She is a displaced immigrant who now lives in the USA, fighting for frontline communities' voices to be heard as they are often forgotten in the climate change conversation.



Image credit: Alliance for Climate Education

Many western countries, like the UK, manufacture goods in Bangladesh because the costs of production are much lower. This was the case in the colonial era too. Many clothes are produced in Bangladesh but industries and workers are pressured to make them as cheaply as possible. The people who work in the factories are paid very little and often the production of clothes has severe consequences for the environment. For example, a lot of water is used to produce clothes which can dry up or pollute water sources.

Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to the gruelling effects of climate change as many water sources flow through the country. It is also low-lying, meaning it is very vulnerable to rising sea levels.

Speaking to XQ Super School in 2019, Aryaana said:

"Start small. Look within—and towards the communities—you come from, and ask yourself about all the stories you and people know. Is there a common thread connecting all these stories? For me, I thought a lot about the floods and hurricanes, and the effects they have on the different communities I come from. As a young person who could not even vote to give these issues the limelight, activism looked a lot like me educating myself, and all those around me. The goal is not to change the world alone but to do something—anything—that can create a ripple. So, start small."

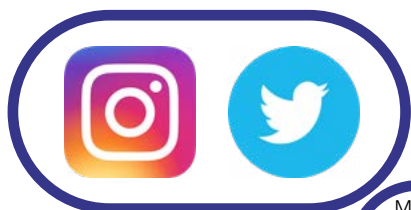
Born  
**2001/2**



More info:  
• [Interview with XQ superschool](#)



## Daphne Frias



Born  
**2001/2**

More info:

- [Interview with Mission Mag](#)

Daphne Frias is a Latina activist from Harlem in New York City who has cerebral palsy. She wants to highlight the implications of the climate crisis for disabled people. Speaking to Mission Mag in 2021, Daphne said:



*Image credit: Oswego, State University of New York*

“When we think about the climate crisis, you think about the growing number of natural disasters that are going to be happening as a result. In those instances, you often are required to evacuate rapidly, but if you’re disabled you often don’t have the ability to get up and run. You also can’t afford to get your medical devices and mobility aid to get destroyed in these natural disasters.”

This highlights how disabled people may be disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change – an example of climate injustice.

In addition, issues of climate justice are particularly important to Daphne because of the community she grew up in. She lives in a minority community and has witnessed first-hand how buildings such as factories are often located in areas of high deprivation. This means these areas are subjected to higher levels of pollution. This is an example of climate injustice that makes the climate conversation especially important to her.

Having seen such inequalities arising because of climate change, Daphne helped organise the September 2019 Climate Strikes in New York City alongside Greta Thunberg. Over 315,000 people showed up to the New York strike!

Daphne says that anyone can get involved in their own communities, and become an activist! The best place to start is by asking yourself: **“is there anything I’m upset about?”**

Then, her further top tips are to:

- Write letters and speak from the heart
- Don’t forget to be specific in your requests
- Get all your pals involved too!



## Activity: Letters to the Earth

Inspired by Daphne Frias's tip to write letters and speak from the heart, we want you to join in on the Letters To The Earth project. Have a think about some of your fears, frustrations, your hopes and loves about what is happening in the world.

Once you have done this, you are ready to write your letter! It can be written to anyone or anything: the Earth, the future, a person in a position of power, the sea or an animal. Think about some of the issues from this booklet; about the activists and how passionate they are. What world do you dream of?

You can get super creative: it can be a letter, something poetic, or a form of art. Just express yourself in whatever way you feel most comfortable. Good luck!

Click the image to go to the website!

