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“A New Fight for Civil Rights”

Every generation has a civil rights movement. In the 1960s, Americans fought for the right to sit where they wanted, vote freely, and attend integrated schools. For my generation, the fight is expanding to something even more basic: the right to breathe clean air, live safely, and have a future on a livable planet.

For my generation, the fight for a livable future is not just about environmental policy. It is about redefining civil rights and recognizing that climate justice and mental wellness are basic human rights. While the Civil Rights Movement fought against segregation and discrimination in schools, transportation, and public spaces, today’s struggles also include the right to live in a safe and healthy environment. Climate change does not affect everyone equally, and the communities harmed the most are often low-income communities and communities of color.

In New Orleans, the effects of climate change are already visible through stronger hurricanes, flooding, and extreme temperatures. However, these dangers do not affect everyone the same way. Because of historical inequality and housing patterns, many low-income communities and communities of color live in areas that are more vulnerable to flooding or closer to heavy industry. Along the Mississippi River corridor, known as Cancer Alley, petrochemical plants and refineries are located near neighborhoods where many residents are Black and working class. Pollution from these facilities harms people’s health, increasing risks of illnesses such as cancer and respiratory disease. When climate change makes storms stronger and flooding worse, these same communities face even greater danger. This shows that climate change is not only an environmental problem but also a civil rights issue because it affects people’s safety, health, and ability to live stable lives.

Climate change also affects people mentally and emotionally. Many young people feel anxiety about the future because they know they will live with the long-term effects of environmental damage. This stress can be even stronger for communities that already face discrimination, poverty, or environmental harm. When people constantly worry about disasters, pollution, or losing their homes, it can take a serious toll on their mental health.

To create a fairer future, we must recognize that clean air, safe housing, and access to mental health support are basic rights. My campaign slogan, “Secure Our Future, Today,” connects environmental action with social justice. It encourages people to act now to protect communities and prevent further harm. This could include limiting industrial pollution near neighborhoods, investing in stronger infrastructure, and

supporting the communities most affected by climate change. Just as past generations fought for equal rights under the law, my generation must fight for the right to breathe clean air, live safely, and have hope for the future.