



CLIMATE VANGUARD

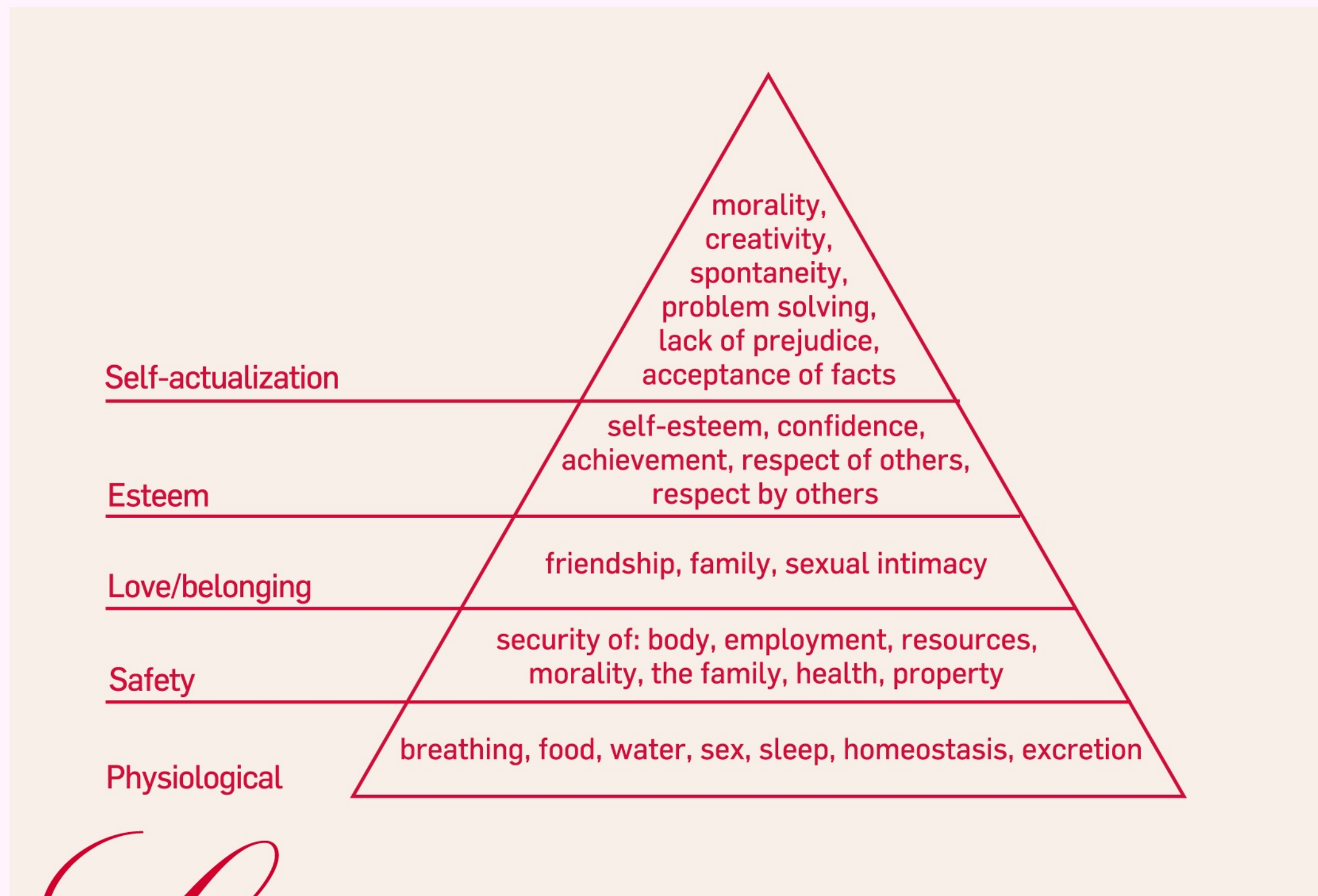
Style
is political.

here's why →

From awkward first dates and belly laughs with lifelong friends to traditional tunes passed down through generations and spontaneous poems scribbled on napkins, **love is undeniably among the most powerful forces shaping human life.**

Yet the ways we understand and practice love are not timeless or fixed. They evolve alongside changes in how production, power, and culture are organised in society.

In today's world, love is simultaneously a human necessity and a servant of capitalism. →



Love: **A Human Necessity**

On the one hand, humans depend on love and social connection for emotional, mental, and physical health. Maslow's famous *Hierarchy of Needs* identifies "Love and Belongingness" as a fundamental need.

Scientific research has shown that love shapes both the brain and body: feeling safe, cared for, and emotionally supported lowers stress hormones, activates bonding neurochemicals like dopamine, and supports overall wellbeing. The opposite is also true, as social isolation and loneliness erode our health.

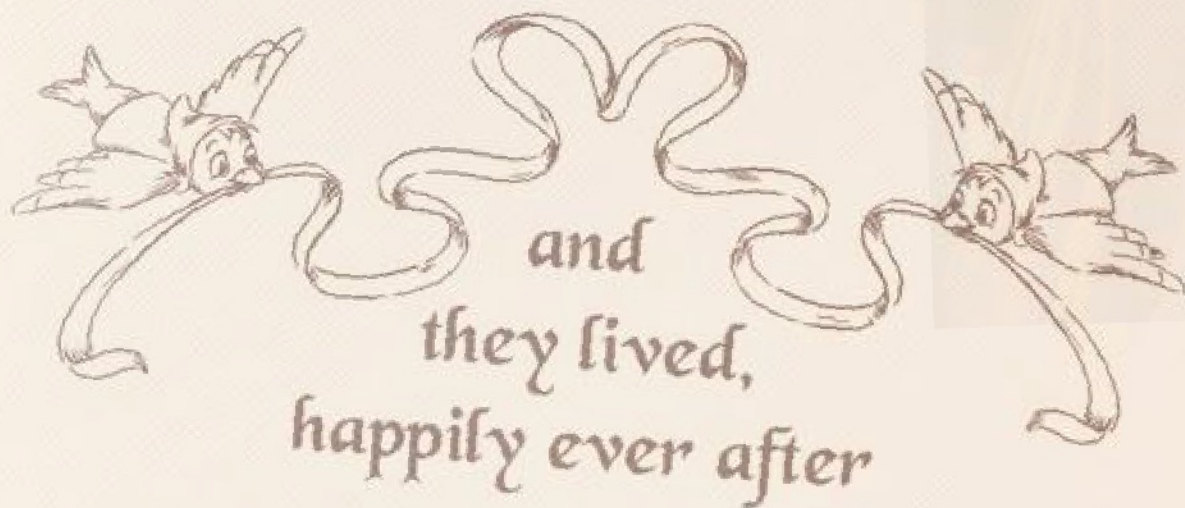


Love: **A Servant of Capitalism**

At the same time, it is irrefutable that the dynamics that characterise capitalism – private property, artificial scarcity, coercive competition, and systemic violence – seep into the ways we love.

In a 1923 essay, Bolshevik revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai argued that under capitalism, romantic love becomes equated with “the absolute and indivisible possession of the beloved person.”

This “all-embracing love” elevates romantic partnership above all other bonds, marginalising non-romantic relationships and weakening people’s commitment to the collective. Ultimately, this weakens the liberatory struggle of working and oppressed people. There are many other powerful analyses of how love is distorted to maintain and reproduce capitalism →



Bridgerton presents love as a scarce prize won through romantic pursuit and competition, reinforcing the idea that security, belonging, and care are attained privately through marriage rather than collectively through transformed social relations.

Love as a Private Good

The glorification of romance saturates mainstream culture. Popular films and books teach us that there is one true love destined to complete us; that one person should be our primary source of care; and that romantic fulfillment can compensate for the social isolation and material precarity that capitalism produces.

In other words, this 'romance myth' *privatises* love. In doing so, it shores up ideological and emotional investment in the nuclear family, an institution that facilitates capitalism's exploitation of unpaid care work.



Love as Reproductive Labour

In the 1970s, socialist feminist organisers launched the Wages for Housework campaign to expose capitalism's reliance on domestic work, largely unpaid and performed by feminised people. Without this social reproductive labour (such as food preparation, cleaning, and raising children), waged workers would be unable to generate profits for capital.

Yet this care labour is rarely recognised as work and is instead framed as acts of love: natural, voluntary, and spontaneous. By romanticising exploitation, capitalism obscures the extraction occurring inside the home.



In the Netflix show *Adolescence*, Manda (the mum of the family) performs constant emotional regulation and conflict mediation, absorbing the psychological stress of a family in crisis. This emotional reproduction work helps sustain familial relationships.

Emotional reproduction – the management of feelings and the maintenance of relationships – is an essential dimension of social reproduction.

Comforting a hurt child, soothing a burnt-out partner, suppressing anger to keep the peace: this emotional labour eases the psychological damage of daily life under capitalism. It is often seen as the natural personality of a usually feminised person, obscuring the effort and skill required to tend to emotions.

This emotional burden is unequally distributed between genders and especially pronounced in heterosexual relationships, where it reinforces gendered hierarchies.



In the film *Anora*, Vanya, the son of a Russian oligarch, buys the attention and affection of Ani, a sex worker who lives in New York City. Vanya convinces Ani that they have a future together, before ultimately discarding her when he no longer has a use for her.

Love as a Commodity

Today, reproductive labour has been increasingly displaced from the home to the market.

But to what extent can love be commodified?

Marxist scholar Kristen Ghodsee argues that, as an essential human emotion, love has use value, but only part of it translates into exchange value.* She identifies three components of love: attention, affection, and reciprocal flow, i.e. the natural, non-transactional cycle of giving and receiving that sustains relationships.

***Note:** Use value is a thing's capacity to satisfy a human need or want, whereas exchange value is the value that thing acquires in relation to other commodities through market exchange.



In the film *Past Lives*, Nora and Hae Sung have strong reciprocal flow. They connect at a deep level and are able to emotionally nourish each other despite long lapses in contact and geographic distance.

Capitalism can turn attention and affection into commodities (e.g. therapy or sex work). As these resources become more scarce, their market value rises, further intensifying the drive to commodify them. This leaves less time and energy for non-market forms of care – like listening to a friend complain about their boss – increasing our reliance on attention and affection that are bought and sold.

In contrast, the third component of love, reciprocal flow, resists commodification because it relies on genuine care for others' wellbeing. But cultivating it requires shared time, material security, and social structures that prioritise connection – conditions capitalism systematically erodes.

In short, capitalism monetises what it can and undermines what it cannot.

Love as a Revolutionary Motivation

But even as capital uses and distorts love, it has also been a primary driver for socialist revolutionaries throughout time.

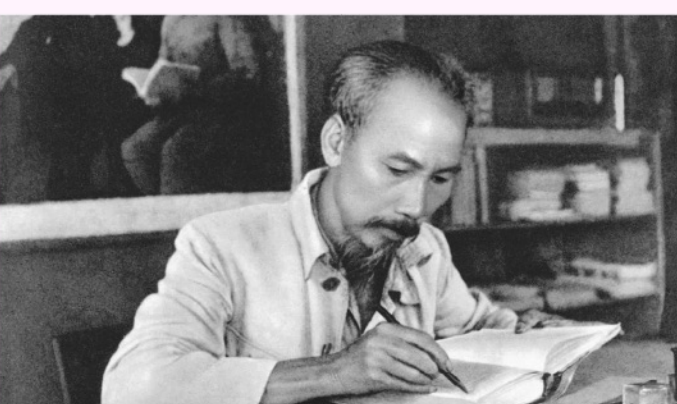
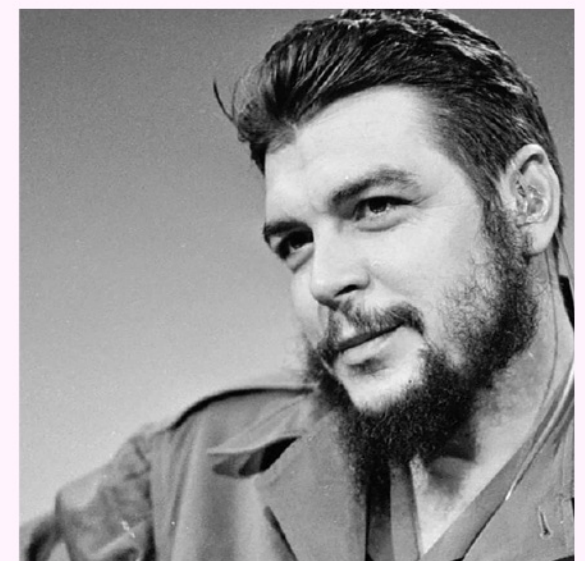


"For a social system to be built on solidarity and co-operation it is essential that people should be capable of love and warm emotions. ...Love is an emotion that unites and is consequently of an organizing character."

– **Alexandra Kollontai**

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality."

– **Che Guevara**



"Love other human beings as you would love yourself."

– **Hồ Chí Minh**

THE ONLY THING MORE
POWERFUL THAN HATE IS LOVE

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Anti-ICE Organizing Is Creating Counter-Institutions Based on Care

Rapid-response networks and mutual aid are not charity. They're shared infrastructure for collective care and survival.

By Rashida James-Saadiya, TRUTHOUT
February 4, 2023



Love as a Terrain of Struggle

The contradictory nature of love under capitalism – as both a human necessity and a justification for exploitation and harm – makes it a critical terrain of struggle.

We must build a liberatory politics of love that challenges exploitation and fosters belonging. This will entail expanding our practice of loving beyond the narrow confines of romantic partnerships and the nuclear family, weaving broad webs of collective care. This is the path towards an eco-socialist society rooted in mutual flourishing.