

The Pyramid Metaphor

A Tested Metaphor that Reveals How Exploitation Is Structural—and How It Can Be Changed



The Story You're Telling

Our economy is being built like a pyramid. A wealthy few at the top profit by standing on the backs of working people at the bottom. But a pyramid is a built structure—and what is built can be torn down and replaced with something new.

In More Detail

The *Pyramid* metaphor helps people see that our economy is not natural or inevitable—it is designed. Using the shape of a pyramid, we can explain how wealth gets concentrated at the top while those at the bottom bear the weight without sharing in the profit. Workers are the foundation of the economy: the large, weight-bearing base that keeps the whole structure standing. And because a pyramid is a structure that was built, it can be toppled and rebuilt differently—by workers coming together across race and background to demand collective solutions, such as unions and worker-owned businesses.

Example: Right now, our economy is being built like a pyramid. Corporations and the wealthy few sit at the top, while those of us who form the foundation—manufacturing workers, care workers, service workers, people of every race and background—bear all the weight while the profits rise upward. But a pyramid is built by people. When working people come together in unions and push for businesses owned by workers, not corporations, we can topple the pyramid and build a fair economy that works for everyone.

User Notes

How to Use It

- Use the present tense: Say the economy “is being built” like a pyramid. This signals ongoing human agency—and the possibility of change.
- Describe workers as the large, weight-bearing base that holds up the whole structure while profits rise upward to a few at the top.
- Be explicit that corporations and the wealthy are building the pyramid on purpose—it is designed, not natural.
- Explicitly include workers across race, gender, and sector as the foundation. This avoids zero-sum thinking about workers competing with each other and reinforces solidarity.
- Follow the problem with a clear solution: Through unions, worker-owned businesses, and policy change, we can topple the pyramid and rebuild a more balanced economy.

Glossary of Words for the *Pyramid* Metaphor

Foundation	Concentrated at the top	Built on our backs
Base	Rising upward	Pushing down
Weight-bearing	Designed	Bear the weight
Structure	Constructed	Tear down
Toppling	Reshape	Dismantle
Rebuilding	Hierarchy	