

Magnus Carlsen, Chess World Champion, Breaks the Rules of Chess as a Symbol for Equality

In chess, white always goes first. And by going first, you have an advantage over your opponent. But why should colour determine who starts and gets the advantage?

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the rules of chess have been rewritten for a day.

Dusseldorf, 21st of March, 2019 –

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, four-time Chess World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, and his rival, Anish Giri, flipped the board and turned the game upside down by breaking a key rule: white moves first.

So, on this special day, black pieces make the first move.

The two men, who maintain a respectful, yet sometimes cheeky rivalry, have spoken out in favour of equality and anti-discrimination. They have made it clear, through their symbolic move, that nobody should have an advantage or disadvantage because of colour.

The campaign has been created with support of UNESCO's International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR.

"We cannot change the rules of chess permanently, but we flipped the board for one game to use chess to bring a new perspective to the discussion about equality," says the Norwegian Chess World Champion Magnus Carlsen.

Carlsen, who creates his own chess apps through the company Play Magnus, has also temporarily changed the rules in the 'Play Magnus' app to show his support for the campaign. The limited-time update will allow players to decide for themselves which colour they want to start the game with. In addition, users of the Magnus Trainer app will be able to play through 'The Immortal Game' — a famous game from back in 1851 which also started with black moving first.

Additionally, the chess community is supporting the message of equality. The website chess24.com is hosting a black to start "Banter Blitz Marathon," in which chess grandmasters play with the temporary change of rule against non-professionals on the site.

With the breaking of a single, but decisive rule, as well as the hashtag #MoveForEquality, the campaign not only writes a new chapter in chess history, but sends a strong message to both chess lovers and the rest of the world on an international day against racism. The accompanying film, as well as further information and material, can be found at www.moveforequality.com.

How you can you take part

People around the world will be encouraged to share their own stories and messages of support using the hashtag #MoveForEquality on social media.