

# The Right Move

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Few stories are as compelling and thought-provoking as Anna Muzychuk's. A Ukrainian chess grandmaster, she has not merely navigated the complex and competitive world of international chess with brilliance and finesse, she has also become a symbol of unwavering commitment to personal freedom, gender equality, and the power of individual conviction.

Born into a family deeply entrenched in the world of chess, Muzychuk's journey was never just about mastering the game but also about understanding its broader implications. Chess, in its essence, is a microcosm of society — a battlefield where strategy, foresight, and decision-making reflect the complexities of the human condition. For her, the game became a platform for showcasing her exceptional talent and advocating for a world where such talent can thrive unencumbered by unjust societal norms.



The pivotal moment in Muzychuk's career came in 2017 when she forfeited her opportunity to defend her titles at the Women's World Speed Chess Championship in Saudi Arabia. This decision was not merely a personal or professional sacrifice; it was a profound statement against a political system that seeks to control individuals, particularly women, at the expense of their freedom and growth. By standing against the imposition of anti-feminist rules and traditions, Muzychuk spotlighted the inherent conflict between oppressive political systems and the nurturing of talent and genius. While she did not extensively detail the exact details of the restrictions at the tournament itself in her public statements, her decision was influenced by the broader context of Saudi Arabia's laws and social norms at the time.

Saudi Arabia has traditionally enforced a conservative dress code on women, requiring them to wear abayas (long robes) and, in many cases, headscarves or niqabs, especially in public areas. For international events held in Saudi Arabia, female participants often face the expectation to adhere to these dress norms, which are a restriction on personal freedom and an imposition of the country's conservative values on foreign visitors.

At the time of Muzychuk's decision, Saudi Arabia operated under a guardianship system which required women to obtain permission from a male guardian (usually a husband, father, brother, or son) for various activities, including travel. Although the specifics of how this system would apply to international female participants were not precise, the overarching presence of such restrictions highlighted the systemic inequality faced by women in the country.

It should not be overlooked that there are principles at work here. Personal freedom is the bedrock upon which creativity, innovation, and excellence stand. History is replete with examples of how environments that cherish and uphold individual liberties become fertile grounds for the flourishing of genius. Conversely, systems prioritizing control over freedom often stifle creativity and inhibit the potential for groundbreaking achievements.

Muzychuk's refusal to compete under conditions that would compromise her values underscores a critical message: that the control exerted by some political systems over their citizens — dictating how they dress, behave, and even think — is fundamentally at odds with the nurturing of talent and the promotion of intellectual freedom. Such policies not only demean individual dignity but also erode the foundation of societal progress built on free individuals' diverse contributions.



Her decision resonated across the globe, serving as a rallying cry for those who believe in the sanctity of personal freedom and the right to self-expression. Her stand extends far beyond the realm of chess. They touch upon the fundamental principles that underpin the People's Party of Canada (PPC) and its commitment to individual liberties, personal responsibility, and the minimization of government interference in the lives of citizens.

As we reflect on Anna Muzychuk's story, we are reminded of the enduring value of personal freedom, not just as a principle but as a practical foundation for nurturing talent, promoting equality, and advancing societal progress. Her legacy extends beyond her achievements in chess, serving as an enduring testament to the power of individual conviction and the importance of standing up for what one believes. In a world where the battle for personal freedoms continues, Muzychuk's story stands as a beacon of hope and a guide for future generations in pursuing excellence, guided by the light of freedom and the strength of personal conviction.



Canada experienced its fight for personal freedoms at about the same time. One noted example is Dr. Jordan Peterson, a Canadian clinical psychologist and professor, who has been a vocal critic of "compelled speech" laws in Canada, particularly in the context of Bill C-16. This bill, which became law in June 2017, amended the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to add "gender identity or expression" as being protected from discrimination. Peterson's critique points out that this legislation can be used to compel individuals to use specific pronouns for transgender and non-binary people, infringing upon free speech rights.

Peterson argues that while he supports the protection of all individuals from discrimination and harassment, mandating the use of particular language through legal mechanisms is a dangerous overreach of government power. He contends that such laws place undue restrictions on individual freedoms, particularly the freedom of speech. Peterson fears that the precedent set by enforcing language use could lead to broader constraints on what can be said, thought, or taught, potentially stifling debate and discussion on contentious issues. He posits that the freedom to engage in open dialogue, including the ability to question and critique, is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society.

We can not allow our current government to continue to erode our rights. We must forever be on guard. Please allow me a few more sentences to describe a historical situation where rights were instituted and then taken away. Is this starting in Canada?

In the 1970s, Iraq experienced a period of relative modernization and liberalization, particularly regarding women's rights and freedoms. This era was marked by the Ba'ath Party's rise to power. The government promoted secularism and embarked on a modernization campaign that included significant strides in education, healthcare, and women's rights.

During this time, Iraqi women enjoyed a level of freedom and participation in public life that was progressive for the region. They had access to education at all levels, and the government actively encouraged women to pursue careers in various fields, including science, education, and

the public sector. Iraqi women were also involved in politics, with legislation passed to promote gender equality in some areas of law and society.



However, the situation for women in Iraq began to change as the country faced wars, economic sanctions, and political instability, particularly following the Gulf War in 1991 and the subsequent years of sanctions. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the turmoil that followed further destabilized the country, leading to a resurgence of conservative forces and a rollback of many of the freedoms and rights that women had previously enjoyed.

The post-2003 era saw an increase in sectarian violence and the rise of extremist groups that imposed strict interpretations of Islamic law, severely restricting women's public participation and rights. Women's freedom of movement became limited, and there was a significant increase in violence against women, including domestic violence and so-called "honour killings." The legal system and societal norms, influenced by the growing power of conservative and sectarian groups, increasingly subjected women to traditional roles and reduced their public and professional presence.

Thus, the freedoms and rights that Iraqi women enjoyed in the 1970s were significantly eroded over the following decades due to political instability, conflict, and the rise of conservative forces within the country. The situation for women in Iraq remains complex, with ongoing efforts by various groups to reclaim and advance women's rights amidst continuing challenges.

As we stand at the crossroads of history, witnessing the tale of Anna Muzychuk's bold defiance and the echoes of voices past, we are reminded of the fragility of freedom and the relentless vigilance it demands.

In the face of systemic constraints and societal expectations, Muzychuk's stance illustrates the importance of standing firm for one's beliefs. Her story transcends the realm of chess, resonating with a broader struggle for personal freedoms against the backdrop of a world increasingly inclined toward conformity and control. This is a reminder that the fight for freedom and equality is perennial, demanding constant engagement and courage from each of us.

We are compelled to confront the reality of our situation here in Canada. The lessons of history illuminate the path forward, emphasizing the necessity to defend our freedoms against encroachment with unwavering resolve. The People's Party of Canada, and indeed all who value liberty, must heed this call to action, championing policies and practices that safeguard individual rights and foster an environment where talent, creativity, and innovation can flourish.

Let us draw inspiration from Anna Muzychuk's courage and the legacy of those who have fought for their rights around the globe. Let this be a rallying cry for us to engage in the civic life of our country with renewed vigor, to question, to challenge, and to contribute to a society that honors the dignity of everyone and the boundless potential of the human spirit. In doing so, we not only honor those who have paved the way but also light a beacon for generations to come, guiding them in their quests for freedom, equality, and the right to reach their fullest potential. The battle for our freedoms is here and now. Let us rise to the challenge, for in the pursuit of liberty, there is no move more powerful than standing up for what you believe.