Los Suns

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It's not unprecedented for athletes here to object to racist policies, military invasions, and various other crimes and stupidities.

The raised, gloved fists of Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the podium at the 1968 Olympics provide the most dramatic and public example of athletes taking a public stand against oppression. For their courage, Smith and Carlos were demonized and hustled out of town by the U.S. Olympic Committee, though today they are celebrated, at least in some circles.

Muhammad Ali gave up several years of his career in the ring and risked prison when he refused induction during the Viet Nam War.

Mahhoud Abdul-Rauf, late of the Denver Nuggets, brought down a rain of boos on his head for electing not to stand during the singing of the national anthem before basketball games.

More recently, we have become accustomed to the Michael Jordan theory of avoiding controversial positions. Asked why he would not support a Democrat, Jordan allegedly replied, "Republicans buy sneakers, too."

So it's encouraging to see Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns object to the new law in Arizona, and encouraging also, as well as surprising, to see the owner of the team dress his players in uniforms that read "Los Suns." (One wonders why not "Los Sols," but perhaps that would have been too much to expect.) Major League Baseball's players' union has also objected to the law, although the union's contention that Latino players coming into Phoenix to play the Diamondbacks might have cause to worry about their own safety seems a little forced. Wealthy ballplayers are unlikely to be victims of profiling, but good for the union for their sense of solidarity.

It will be interesting to see whether Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig will pay any attention to those who've urged him to pull the 2011 All-Star Game out of Phoenix. If he does, I hope he'll refer to those most likely to be persecuted under the new law as "undocumented" rather than "illegal," though that, too, might be too much to expect.