

Methodist University Community Oral History Project  
Methodist University  
Fayetteville, NC

**Ralph Molina**

Interview Conducted by  
Patrick W. O'Neil  
August 9, 2016  
Fayetteville, NC

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Interview of

**RALPH MOLINA**

Interviewed by

**PATRICK W. O'NEIL**

0:01

**O'NEIL:** Hi there. My name is Patrick O'Neil, it's August 9, 2016, I'm at the Crown Arena in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and I'm here with—if you could say your name?—

0:10

**MOLINA:** Ralph Molina.

0:11

**O'NEIL:** —Ralph Molina, and we're here at the Donald Trump Rally. So, typically what I do is I ask people about their lives first, and then we move on to politics and Donald Trump.

0:21

**MOLINA:** Sure.

0:22

**O'NEIL:** So, if I could ask, where were you born?

0:24

**MOLINA:** I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1969. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. I'm an only child. I'm the son of a postal employee.

0:41

**O'NEIL:** Really?

0:42

**MOLINA:** Yeah, my dad was—he started as a clerk, and moved up the ranks; he became Postmaster. My mother was a teacher.

0:52

**O'NEIL:** What did she teach?

0:53

**MOLINA:** She taught elementary school, but she actually retired as soon as I was born. So she was a teacher, and when I was born, she retired. She actually had an accident—

1:06

**O'NEIL:** Oh, I'm sorry.

1:07

**MOLINA:** She had a—a lawnmower shot a corkscrew and hit her in the leg inside the classroom.

1:18

**O'NEIL:** Inside?

1:19

**MOLINA:** Yeah, she was teaching. It was like taking a shot in the leg.

1:22

**O'NEIL:** Just a freak accident.

1:24

**MOLINA:** Right. And because of that, she stopped teaching, and it kind of worked both ways, you know, because she stayed home with me, taking care of me, and she taught me: by the time I went to kindergarten I was already ahead of the game. But, yeah, she had an accident in the classroom. She still has that corkscrew lodged inside her leg, right next to her femur, and it's there. But, yeah, that's how it went. So I was raised in Puerto Rico, and when I got out of high school, joined the military at nineteen, in 1989. I joined the Army and I went to Basic Training in Fort Dix, New Jersey.

2:19

**O'NEIL:** Can I ask, why did you join the military?

2:21

**MOLINA:** I joined the military because at that time I was—. My parents had just gotten divorced, and at that time I was a little bit lost, didn't know, you know—. I started college, but I went to school for my first year, and one, I didn't have enough money for the second year, and I was kind of looking for an alternative to do something with my life, you know, something positive with my life.

2:57

**O'NEIL:** So, where did you go to college for that year?

3:01

**MOLINA:** Initially, I went to Sacred Heart University in Puerto Rico, and then—so, I finished my first year, then I joined the military, and went to Basic Training in New Jersey, Fort Dix. Then I went to A.I.T.—Advanced Individual Training—in Fort Gordon, Georgia. I came in the Army as a Signal soldier. I was a 31 Uniform, what used to be called a combat signaler. Those guys, what we used to do was, you know, operate radio systems, telephone systems, lines, and internal and external communications.

3:47

**O'NEIL:** So, more the technological aspect.

3:50

**MOLINA:** Right. But, you know, back then we didn't have cellphones or any of that, so that's what we operated with. And my first duty assignment was in Fort Bliss, Texas, with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment—A.C.R., 3rd A.C.R. In 1991—it was 1990. In August, 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

4:24

**O'NEIL:** I've heard of that.

4:25

**MOLINA:** Right. And so not even a year after I was in the Army, I deployed with my unit in the biggest deployment since World War II, and we deployed to Saudi Arabia in September—end of September, beginning of October, 1990. And we went through that and I stayed in—we went through Saudi Arabia, and then we crossed the border into Iraq in February, 1991. And it took us about two weeks to clear everything out, but our unit finally turned around at about the beginning of March, 1991, and then came back to Saudi Arabia and I redeployed back to the United States in April—April, May.

5:29

**O'NEIL:** Can I ask two questions? When—. You joined the Army—

5:34

**MOLINA:** Yes.

5:35

**O'NEIL:** —before America went to war, and moments after you joined the Army, America went to war. What were your feelings about that when that happened? Were you excited? Scared?

5:44

**MOLINA:** I was scared. Yeah, I was scared, I was very scared. Initially, you know, when I joined the military in 1989, remember, George Bush's father was the President at that time, and in December '89, we invaded Panama.

6:03

**O'NEIL:** Panama. That's right.

6:04

**MOLINA:** So when [the] Panama invasion came in, there was talk about invading Panama when I was in school. So we were all getting trained and ready to go to war in Panama. So we had already gone through that little scare, but I mean, that was an Airborne/Ranger kind of operation, and I didn't know where I was going, 'cause I was still in school. But they were pushing everybody, you know, to kind of be ready, you know, kind of that sense of urgency on training, and physical fitness and discipline, you know, just kind of—. I had Vietnam veterans being my drill sergeants, also Grenada veterans who were also my drill sergeants. So I had veterans who had been into combat who were actually mentoring and teaching us how to become soldiers. So it was a good experience, but it was kind of scary, you know: it was, like, kind of the real thing, you know. 'Cause at that time, the Army was a "Be All You Can Be," [this was the Army's marketing slogan], and so I was trying to be all I could be.

7:17

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. How did the tour go in Saudi Arabia and Iraq? For you?

7:22

**MOLINA:** It went—. No war is okay, you know? It was a big experience. I think it was the biggest experience of my life at that time. War is not a nice thing. I did lose two friends. One was a Master Sergeant who was about—he was about fifty years old. I mean, this man was old. He had been through a few things. He'd been through Vietnam. And he got hit by shrapnel that came from—we don't even know where it came from. I mean, it was an explosion, and a piece of metal just hit him in the head. He wasn't wearing his helmet. And he passed.

8:21

**O'NEIL:** I'm sorry.

8:21

**MOLINA:** And another friend of mine, this was a young kid, he stepped on a land mine. And he passed.

And that was about fifty meters from where we were. So that was ugly. But, you know, yeah, it stays on you, you know? But you do what you gotta do, and you stay strong and you stay in the game and you stay focused and watch your surroundings, and you learn to watch your surroundings and watch everything around you, and value your friends and value life, which is the most important thing, you know? Life. You only have one. You have a lot of teeth, you have two legs, you have two arms, but you only have one life. And you gotta protect it. But yeah, it was a learning experience. But I returned, and—. So we returned, and in 1992, I then deployed—or, not deployed, but transferred—P.C.S., called Permanent Change of Station—to Korea. And I went to Second I.D.—Second Infantry Division, Camp Casey, Korea. Dongducheon. And I was in 122 Signal Battalion then. And that was a great experience. It was crazy. It was wild.

10:04

**O'NEIL:** How so?

10:05

**MOLINA:** Oh, Korea was—it was still kind of, you know, and it still is, kind of like a Cold War kind of thing, you know, with the North. 'Cause the Korean War never actually stopped, you know? It was just like a cease-fire. So it was an experience, you know, military-wise and then personal. I got to see Korea everywhere. I had a good job. I had two good jobs. I had two really good jobs. My first job in Korea

was, I was actually a messenger. And I get up in the morning and I get messages in envelopes and deliver them to every unit, Headquarters of the Second Infantry Division, we had to hand-carry these things. You know nowadays everything is—

11:05

**O'NEIL:** Electronic and digital. Yeah.

11:06

**MOLINA:** —digital. Back then, we had to go pick up these things, and these printouts, we'd pick them up in envelopes and then we'd bring those envelopes to the units, hand-delivered to the units. We had to do that every day. So I get up in the morning, about four o'clock in the morning, before P.T. [Physical Training], because you have to be out on the road before P.T. started, because when P.T. starts, you know everything shuts down. And so we get everything up and going, and we *drive*. We would drive everywhere from Seoul to the D.M.Z. [the Demilitarized Zone dividing North Korea from South Korea]. Every day, five days a week.

11:45

**O'NEIL:** Wow. Every day?

11:47

**MOLINA:** Every day. I drove through the roads of Korea, on the civilian roads in a civilian car. And that was one of the craziest driving experiences that I've had in my life. When I was stationed in El Paso, I drove a few times to Juarez, and that was crazy. But driving in Seoul, Korea, to me was even crazier, 'cause, I mean, driving into Seoul—. Seoul was the second- or third-largest city in the world at that time,

or at least the top-five. And, I mean, it's a big city. These cities are big, and you drive—. If you miss an intersection, you're done. And there was no GPS, we didn't have GPS, or none of that. You know, you really had to read map[s] and read roads and learn. Learn quick how to read the sign in Hangul, because they're not in English. So you learn quick. But it was a good experience. So I drove all around Korea, and then I got a job. I got promoted, and they gave me a job as a radio operator for the Division commander, in his helicopter. The Division commander had a command helicopter, and I was part of the crew, part of his crew. And I operated his radio systems where he could—from that helicopter he could command and touch everyone in the Division. And it was interesting. It was a really interesting job. A lot of times we go up in the air and we stay there for hours on hours on end. But it was fun. It was fun. We had great pilots. The top pilots of the unit, they were the pilots of these helicopters, and actually it was the battalion commander who was the one piloting that helicopter. And it was a good experience. Then I came home and I joined the Reserves, went back to Puerto Rico and I joined the 448 Engineer Battalion in Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. And while I was in the Reserves, I went back to school. Took advantage of my G.I. Bill, and I went to school, back again to Sacred Heart University, and I finished my bachelor's degree in Communications and Management.

14:34

**O'NEIL:** And then what did you do?

14:36

**MOLINA:** And then I started working for a firm, it's a stockbroker firm that used to be called Paine Webber. Paine Webber in Puerto Rico; they later became U.B.S. So I started working for them, but then I met this girl. I fell in love with her and I got married. And even though I had, you know, it was an okay job, when I got married and decided to make a family—you know, start a family, not make it, you

know—start a family, I knew I didn't want to do that down there. I knew I didn't want to raise my family in Puerto Rico.

15:21

**O'NEIL:** Why not?

15:22

**MOLINA:** Because Puerto Rico is not safe, and I say that, it's kind of like a, you know, tongue-in-cheek kind of thing, but it is true. You know, Puerto Rico is a difficult place to raise a family. There's a lot of drugs, there's a lot of crime. The political status, that indecisiveness of the people of Puerto Rico, that they don't know what they want to be: they don't want to be a state and they don't want to be an independent country, and they're in this limbo status that doesn't help anyone. It doesn't help us here in the mainland, and it doesn't help them in that island. So whenever they make up their mind, if they want to become a state and they become a state, it'll be great. If they want to go independent, go independent, have their own little civil war that every country has when they begin, and let them figure it out. My mom's still there, my mother-in-law's still there, my brother-in-law's there. He's a stockbroker also—or, he is a stockbroker. But my brother-in-law, he had left Puerto Rico and went to school in Seton Hall, and he was working in a firm in—actually in the World Trade Center in 2001 when [it] got hit. He survived, he was a very lucky guy, but he was kind of shell-shocked and he went home. And he stayed there; he's still there. [Laughs.] He got stuck in the “black hole,” like I call it, you know. And he got stuck there and he stayed, and he's still there. Trying to leave. Every day that we talk, he's like, “I'm leaving, man, I'm leaving. I'm packing my stuff.” And a year goes by, and, “Hey, when are you leaving?” “Well, next year I'm leaving, man. I'm telling you, I'm leaving. I'm leaving this place.” So,

we'll see. We'll see what happens. I guess it's not really that bad for him. He's single. He's still single, forty-three years old, he's still single. But anyways.

17:43

**O'NEIL:** So you came to the mainland.

17:44

**MOLINA:** So I took his sister with me, [laughs] and I reenlisted. I reenlisted in the Army, but then I went to O.C.S. [Officer Candidate School] and I became an officer. I was blessed to have that opportunity, I took it, and I became a Second Lieutenant in Fort Benning, Georgia. Went to Airborne School, went to Pathfinder School, I continued to get educated. I commanded a platoon in Fort Benning. In 2001 we went to Egypt. We didn't go to Afghanistan, but we went to Egypt, and we worked there. And then in 2003 my unit deployed to Iraq, and that was number two. And then in 2005 I joined a different unit where I was part of a team. The Army made these little teams called MiTTs. They were called MiTTs, Military Transition—what was it? Military Transition Units, or Military Transi—I forgot already what that was.

19:24

**O'NEIL:** It's fine.

19:24

**MOLINA:** But it was a MiTT [a Military Transition Team]. It was a MiTT unit. And what we were charged to do was to identify and develop the Iraqi military, you know, identify soldiers who were friendly to our

mission, and build them, train 'em; recruit from the street, recruit civilians, train 'em; recruit former soldiers, 'train 'em, give 'em equipment.

20:05

**O'NEIL:** So, what was that experience like?

20:07

**MOLINA:** That was crazy. That sucked. We failed. We see it now. I see it now, and I said it when I was doing it, and I criticized it. I got in trouble. And from the bottom of my heart, I tell you that mission was a failure, not because of us, the soldiers—we were doing our job. But the commanders, or the politics of things, it was just like Vietnam. We were doing things with one hand behind our backs tied up and the other one just giving out shit. Excuse my French.

20:49

**O'NEIL:** What do you—?

20:50

**MOLINA:** Because we couldn't—. You know, we couldn't identify targets, you know. We were out there identifying people to bring 'em in and give 'em equipment. But we couldn't target anyone. Even though we knew there were bad things happening, all we could do was report it up and let 'em do whatever. But in the end, every day we go out on missions, we face the enemy every day, we had to defend ourselves every day, and we couldn't go after anyone. We just had to hold tight and defend ourselves. We lost people doing that. I lost two friends again on that one. It really hit me hard, you know. Because we were kind of alone. Not kind of—we were alone.

21:43

**O'NEIL:** What was your experience—if you don't mind—with the Iraqis whom you were trying to recruit?

21:49

**MOLINA:** They're a bunch of motherfuckers. Just like that. They don't respect us, they don't like us. They didn't want to learn anything. They just wanted to get our equipment, our money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions, cash. Hundreds of millions of dollars in equipment, billions of dollars in equipment. And I'm telling you, I was in the Ninth Mechanized Division [the 9th Armoured Division of the Iraqi Army], the only Mechanized division in Iraq: I built that one with my friends. You know, with my guys. My job was to identify equipment throughout and bring it in, into Iraq, available equipment and bring it into Iraq. We're talking about T-55s, M—whatever the tanks—M-80s. I mean, we're talking about all the old tanks from Pakistan, tanks from China, tanks—AK-47s. It was over a hundred tanks, personnel carriers, that I brought in for this unit. In total it was about 150 pieces of armored equipment. Where is that now? Where is it?

23:21

**O'NEIL:** You tell me.

23:22

**MOLINA:** It's with ISIS. They couldn't even hold it. They couldn't even keep it maintained. Look, every piece of equipment that would come in every day, I'd go and try to put eyes on every piece of equipment every day. Because that was my biggest worry. If these people start taking these pieces of

equipment away, one by one they'll start disappearing. Sure as shit. You know, I would go out and put eyes on every piece of equipment, with my clipboard, you know, just going by, "Okay, this one's here, this one's here, this one's here," and just counting. And they would test me, you know, and they would hide 'em. They would hide the equipment. "Okay, where is it? Where is it?" And they would put 'em behind buildings, between buildings, inside warehouses, inside hangars. They would hide 'em. They would hide—they would test—they would be testing people. You know, they were testing us, if we were actually keeping track of these things. And I guarantee you that when I left, I know that every piece of equipment that I issued was there. Was there. I made sure. My last one that I had to physically grab a General by the neck for was that on a day like today, I brought in twenty-five hundred AK-47s in boxes, brand-new. Twenty-five hundred AK-47s, brand-new. I put them in this place. We all counted them. I counted it, they counted it. "Okay, you got 'em? Good to go. Okay." Break away. Come back the next day, come back in the morning to check on 'em? They were gone. They were not there. I went to this man, to his quarters, and I asked him where the weapons were. He started acting like he didn't know where they were. He's like, "I don't know. I don't know. They were there."

25:36

**O'NEIL:** This man—the General?

25:38

**MOLINA:** The General. It was a General. I have pictures of him! If you ever want a picture, you e-mail me, I'll send you a picture of that guy. And I took him to the hangar, and he was laughing. He was laughing it up. And I had to physically grab this man and threaten him bodily damage. And then he actually broke down, and he was like, "Okay, they're here." They open a door, and sure enough, they were hidden in a room. But they were hiding them. They were trying to—

26:13

**O'NEIL:** This is an American General? An Iraqi General?

26:15

**MOLINA:** No, *no*, man. If it was an American General—. [Laughs.]

26:18

**O'NEIL:** Well, I was wondering! Okay.

26:19

**MOLINA:** No, it was an Iraqi General. No! Ameri—I would *never*—.

26:22

**O'NEIL:** Just getting it in my head.

26:24

**MOLINA:** No. No no no. I would never. [Laughs.] I would never. I would never—.

26:29

**O'NEIL:** That's quite the experience.

26:30

**MOLINA:** No. Unless it was sexual harassment kind of thing, I would ne—. No!

26:32

**O'NEIL:** Sure, sure. So was that your last tour?

26:38

**MOLINA:** No. No, no. So then out of that mission I got a job here in Fort Bragg with the 7th Special Forces Group, and I finally came to the real good side of the military, I guess, where the real things happen. And I came in 2006 to Fort Bragg, to 2nd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group. I was a Service Det[achment] Commander, and I deployed with them again. But this one was to Afghanistan. And with Special Forces I deployed three times to Afghanistan. It was a great experience

27:26

**O'NEIL:** How so? What was great?

27:29

**MOLINA:** I felt like I was really doing something.

27:33

**O'NEIL:** Why there, and less in Iraq?

27:36

**MOLINA:** No, man, Iraq—. Iraq—the mission was a failure. We see it today. The mission was a failure. It was a total failure. We failed the American people. We failed on that one. We see it now. We gave

equipment like it was candy. We gave authority, we gave freedom to people who were just playing us.  
'Cause they knew that all of us were gonna be there for a year

28:20

**O'NEIL:** But Afghanistan was different, you think.

28:23

**MOLINA:** Yeah. Afghanistan is diff—. Well, the unit I was with, the units I worked with, we worked with, you know, the hearts and minds. We tried to earn the trust of the people. We built schools, we built hospitals. Special Forces' mission is different than the conventional forces'. Even though conventional forces started doing something similar, because that's what works. You earn hearts and minds, you help people see the light, you know, even though it was a dangerous situation. But Afghanistan—. You see, Afghanistan wasn't like that. In the '60s and '70s, Afghanistan wasn't what it is today. In the '60s and '70s, Afghanistan was a really good place to go. You could actually go skiing, you know: people'd go skiing, and a lot of people in the '60s'd go smoke hash and smoke weed and have fun, you know—the hippies, you know. But it was different. Afghan people are different. They're different people than—. You know, the Arabs and the Persians, they're different people. And they let you know that they are different, you know. They ensure that you know that they're different.

29:29

**O'NEIL:** So, are you still in the Army?

30:01

**MOLINA:** No, I retired in 2012.

30:03

**O'NEIL:** Okay. Congratulations.

30:04

**MOLINA:** Thank you.

30:05

**O'NEIL:** So, I've kept you half an hour already, but I'd still love to hear more from you.

30:12

**MOLINA:** Keep going!

30:15

**O'NEIL:** Tell me—first off, tell me—. We'll run back for just one second, and then we'll get to Trump and today.

30:21

**MOLINA:** Sure.

30:24

**O'NEIL:** Was your family—growing up, was it political? Were your parents engaged politically?

30:29

**MOLINA:** Yes. Big-time. Big-time.

30:32

**O'NEIL:** How so? In what directions, or in what ways?

30:35

**MOLINA:** Well, my parents were pro-statehood. In Puerto Rico, this thing about Republicans and Democrats, it's not as marked, you know, as it is here. Down there, it's either you are a statehood guy, or you are a status-quo guy, Commonwealth, whatever you want to call that, or pro-independence. And it's a big rivalry, and it's huge. You know, you know, you use the word "huge," here—. ["Huge" is one of Trump's trademark expressions.] But Puerto Rico politics, it's like freaking—like football here. That's how it is down there. Even, you know, from when you're a little kid. My first rally was in 1976, to see former governor, former Congressman Carlos Romero Barceló. [In 1976, Barceló was mayor of San Juan.] That was his name. Or, that is his name—he's still going. And I was seven years old—1976 was his takeover, and he won that election by a landslide. [Jimmy] Carter was up here in the mainland. But then Carlos is a Democrat. You see, Carlos is Democrat, and a lot of the pro-statehood—. The statehood party in Puerto Rico is, like, fifty percent Democrats and fifty percent Republicans. It's like, kind of half and half, right? Even though a lot of Puerto Ricans are conservatives. You know, they believe in marriage, you know, man and woman, even though gay marriage is legal now. But—.

32:42

**O'NEIL:** Culturally conservative.

32:43

**MOLINA:** Culturally conservative, you know: abortion is not a big thing down there. Catholics, mostly Catholics.

32:55

**O'NEIL:** Were you raised Catholic, or not?

32:57

**MOLINA:** Well, I was raised Catholic until I was seven or eight. And then two guys showed up at my house on a bicycle, wearing a white shirt.

33:09

**O'NEIL:** [Laughs.] Okay.

33:11

**MOLINA:** And my dad let them in, and next thing you know, we're Mormons.

33:16

**O'NEIL:** [Laughs.] That's how it happens.

33:17

**MOLINA:** [Laughs.] That's how it happened. And we became Mormons, and I grew up as a Mormon. I mean, active Mormon, until I became an adult. At eighteen, I said, "Now I can choose. Can I choose?" "Yeah." So I'm done. [Laughs.]

33:39

**O'NEIL:** Are you religious today?

33:41

**MOLINA:** I'm Catholic. I'm Roman Catholic.

33:43

**O'NEIL:** So you came back. Sure. Okay.

33:48

**MOLINA:** But my family was sealed in the Temple and everything.

33:50

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. No, the whole deal!

33:52

**MOLINA:** The whole deal! In Salt Lake City, Utah.

33:54

**O'NEIL:** Wow. I've been to that Temple. That's crazy.

33:57

**MOLINA:** Yeah. And not even a year or two later, my dad left with his mistress that he had in church.

[Laughs.]

34:05

**O'NEIL:** [Inaudible.] Well, that's a different story, right there!

34:07

**MOLINA:** [Laughs.] That's a whole different story, man.

34:09

**O'NEIL:** God, I wish we didn't have to talk about Trump; I'd like to hear that story! [Laughs.] Alright.

How did that make you feel?

34:17

**MOLINA:** It was bad. It was bad. It was really bad. It was bad. Yeah, it was bad.

34:18

**O'NEIL:** I bet. That's terrible. How were you with your mom? Did you—how old were you then?

34:24

**MOLINA:** I was seventeen, eighteen, around there.

34:27

**O'NEIL:** Oh, God. How did she take it? Did she need help after that—? All the questions that I don't know how to ask.

34:33

**MOLINA:** Yeah, it was rough. It was rough. It was rough for both of us. That's how I ended up in the Army. I think if I would have stayed in Puerto Rico, I'd either be dead or in jail, or I don't know, you know. And I'm glad.

34:54

**O'NEIL:** Can I pause this for one second?

34:55

**MOLINA:** Yeah.

34:57

**O'NEIL:** Okay. Well that's quite the story.

34:58

**MOLINA:** You're making me talk through about a lot of things. It's like therapy. [Laughs.]

35:00

**O'NEIL:** Well, see, that's what we get to do. Because we're oral historians—so we're not journalists, we're not trying to just find out how you feel about that, although I want to know. But we want to know, sort of, how your life leads to this, as well. So, that's as good an opportunity as any. Why are you here? What brought you here? What are your feelings about Donald Trump? You can answer any one of those questions, and we may come back to one if you only answer one of 'em.

35:30

**MOLINA:** Well, look. You know, I've already told you some—you know, most of my life experience—

35:41

**O'NEIL:** Some of it.

35:42

**MOLINA:** —Some of it. I was involved in politics when I was in college. I was youth vice-president of my party in my county. So in the '90s, and I was with the statehood party, we won two elections. In the '92 and, what was it, '96. The '96 elections and '92. The '96 elections were really, really big ones.

36:18

**O'NEIL:** I remember that.

36:20

**MOLINA:** I was communications analyst for Carlos. Carlos was a Congressman, he was running for Congress, and I was communications analyst for him. A Democrat, keep in mind, Democrat. But in our minds, in my mind and our minds, really, that was not even there, you know. Being a Democrat, being a Republican, it was not even there. I was a conservative then; I'm still a conservative now. But our cause, our push, was statehood, right? That's a common bond between Republicans and Democrats who are pro-statehood in Puerto Rico. We want that. So I had that experience then. Now, I mean, I voted for Bush in 2000 and again in 2004, 'cause I was already here. And I think the conservative views are what really makes us a stronger nation, if we maintain a conservative view. That doesn't mean that we don't take care of the needy, you know, the people who need help. America will always be there.

But I do not think that the government has any business telling me how to raise my children, what to teach and what to tell them. The government has no business how I spend my money, what to do with my money, also, when the money that I make; what to think, what to say.

38:17

**O'NEIL:** Do you feel that the government is telling you to do those things right now?

38:22

**MOLINA:** I feel that there's a lot of intrusiveness with the government.

38:27

**O'NEIL:** How so?

38:29

**MOLINA:** Obama—you know, Affordable Health Care Act, right? It's a system that helps everyone, yeah, it helps everyone to have health coverage. But when you look at it the way it is, it's not really making it cheaper for everyone. And what my thing is, through that, the government have access to every single medical record of every single individual out there in our nation, which I think is a big intrusion of my personal information. But through that, the government knows everything: where I live, where my wife lives, what my kids are, what medical conditions they have. They can access, they can tap into that. That's the biggest way. I mean, that's the easiest way to get control of everyone, through the medical records. You get income, you get, again, you know, medical history—you get everything! Dental records. If the government needs it, they can get it. Got it. You know, you get a subpoena, you can get it. But this is so easily available for anyone, you know, that they don't even need a subpoena; they don't

even need a court order. They don't need anything. They can just tap into a computer, go into a computer, go punch your name, and here, "I have access to everything."

40:17

**O'NEIL:** So, can I ask—you seem to say you think it's good for people to be able to get health care, but that the way that it's being done isn't worth that.

40:31

**MOLINA:** Yeah. I don't think so.

40:33

**O'NEIL:** So, if you had an ideal candidate or an ideal proposal, you would still want the government to be helping people get health care? Or do you think it should be—

40:42

**MOLINA:** Wait, wait, wait. The people who cannot afford it—

40:45

**O'NEIL:** Right.

40:46

**MOLINA:** —the people who cannot afford it, I mean, if you have a good job and you—. Hey, pay what you need. That's the other thing. Pay for what you need. If you're twenty years old, thirty years old, you're a healthy guy, you don't smoke, you exercise, you eat right, you know, you stay in shape: you

don't need to pay coverage for Alzheimer's, or this and—you don't need to pay coverage for things that—. There's things in there that you don't need.

41:12

**O'NEIL:** I'll say, though, I was a healthy twenty year-old and I got cancer. And you wouldn't have predicted that, you know what I'm saying?

41:19

**MOLINA:** Well, yeah.

41:19

**O'NEIL:** So I was very, very lucky to have coverage that I didn't think I would need. Does that make sense?

41:26

**MOLINA:** Yes.

41:26

**O'NEIL:** So, is there a way around that, do you think?

41:28

**MOLINA:** I don't know. I don't.

41:30

**O'NEIL:** [Laughs.] Me, neither.

41:31

**MOLINA:** I don't know. I don't know. I'm pretty sure that—. I don't know. I don't know what to tell you on that one. You shouldn't be smoking, man!

41:44

**O'NEIL:** Would you believe I didn't?

41:45

**MOLINA:** Yes, I do.

41:47

**O'NEIL:** Now, other things, maybe. [Laughs.] Um, but. Okay. So, do you support Trump?

41:56

**MOLINA:** I do.

41:57

**O'NEIL:** Do you think Trump would make government less intrusive?

42:00

**MOLINA:** Yes.

42:01

**O'NEIL:** Why do you think that?

42:04

**MOLINA:** I mean, I trust him that he would do—I mean, he's saying that he's gonna do that. So I think—I believe him. I only have faith in one thing: it's God. I don't have faith in men. But I believe what he's saying. I think he's sincere. I think that we do need to enforce our borders. We do need to enforce our laws.

42:42

**O'NEIL:** Why do we need to enforce our borders? That may be a stupid question, but—

42:45

**MOLINA:** No.

42:45

**O'NEIL:** —do you know what I mean? Like, what's the—

42:47

**MOLINA:** Yup! Because that's what makes us a country! Countries are—you know, their border's established to set—you know, this is—. It's like in your house. You know, you have your fences in your house because fences make good neighbors.

43:08

**O'NEIL:** So I've heard, yeah.

43:09

**MOLINA:** You know? I have a fence that goes all the way around my property. And my neighbor and I, we're good friends. He doesn't have a fence in his yard because I have mine and the other guy has his, so he didn't need to get one. But the guy behind me, he put a fence on his yard. We have, like, a little DMZ between both of our houses.

43:35

**O'NEIL:** Sure, sure. Little bit of North and South Korea there.

43:37

**MOLINA:** [Laughs.] Yeah, we have a little DMZ between us. We both take care of it.

43:43

**O'NEIL:** Guns pointed on both sides, I'm sure.

43:44

**MOLINA:** No, no guns, I mean, no. No, no. We're good friends. But fences make good neighbors. And remember, I was stationed in El Paso. I was stationed in El Paso, and I saw firsthand people crossing the river. I saw it, I've seen it. You know, I've seen that.

44:11

**O'NEIL:** So, I only ask, aren't those people coming here for opportunity?

44:15

**MOLINA:** Whatever, call it what you want. You gotta come here—. You know, okay. Say they're coming for opportunity. We're all looking for opportunity. But we have citizens of this nation, citizens, and citizens come first. Citizens come first. And, look. A pregnant woman—right?—comes across the border, nine months pregnant. She comes across the border and she gives birth, in a hospital in El Paso, or in San Diego. She walks into an emergency room, water's broke, she gives birth. That kid is an American. Right? Okay. So he's an American. So he's born, he's taken care of, he's released from the hospital, he goes back to Mexico. Goes back to Mexico. But that kid is an American. So, a couple weeks later, the girl comes back with her American son, applies for WIC [The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children], food stamps, Medicaid, all the works. It's his right, right? Because he's an American. It's his right to be taken care of because he's, you know—they don't have money. They can't support him. So we give him that. But that boy lives in Mexico. He doesn't live in the United States; he lives in Mexico. Then he speaks Spanish. You know, his culture is Spanish, you know—everything! Even though the language has nothing to do with it, because this country, we can speak whatever, you know. But, I mean, English is our native, or whatever, the official language—our *common* language, let's put it to that. The common language is English; everybody can speak whatever. Got it. But here's the thing: this kid grows up, comes to school, he gets educated in the American system, you know, American education system for *free*. Again, breakfast, lunch, and daycare in the afternoon, for free. Which is not really free, because you and I and every taxpaying person is paying a little bit to that. Right? I don't think that's cool. I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's the way we should do it. I don't think, you know, anchor babies? I don't think that's right. No other country does that.

47:10

**O'NEIL:** Well, they do. I only say—I have a friend who got a teaching job in Finland, and the Finnish government gave her—.

47:18

**MOLINA:** Oh, come on, man.

47:20

**O'NEIL:** I know, I'm just saying! She had two babies there, they're cute little babies, and Finland pays for everything.

47:24

**MOLINA:** They're Finnish. Yeah, of course.

47:27

**O'NEIL:** So, okay. Let me get back to intrusive government.

47:30

**MOLINA:** But they've got sixty percent tax rate.

47:32

**O'NEIL:** I know they do. [O'Neil doesn't know they do. Finland has a progressive income tax in which earners pay between 6% and 32%; other taxes can push the rate for the highest earners up to around 52%.]

47:33

**MOLINA:** So, I mean.

47:34

**O'NEIL:** So they're getting even more. So, let me ask this: about intrusive government—

47:39

**MOLINA:** Hold up.

47:40

**O'NEIL:** Oh, please.

47:40

**MOLINA:** Sixty percent tax rate. That's not what America's about.

47:44

**O'NEIL:** Why not?

47:46

**MOLINA:** Come on, man! I mean, you work for every dollar that you make. You make a hundred cents.  
Sixty cents.

47:54

**O'NEIL:** By the way, I have no idea what the tax rate is in Finland. [See above note.] I'm taking you at your word.

47:56

**MOLINA:** It's in the fifties. I mean, I know Sweden is over fifty percent.

48:01

**O'NEIL:** Sure.

48:02

**MOLINA:** We can Google that up real quick. That doesn't make sense! I mean, that's not the American—. We are a different country. We were established as a capitalist, you know—. You work, you make your own. You have all the opportunities in the world to make it here. That's why hundreds of thousands of people are trying to get into this country *still*.

48:27

**O'NEIL:** They are. It's true.

48:28

**MOLINA:** Every day.

48:29

**O'NEIL:** So, can I ask about intrusive government?

48:32

**MOLINA:** Yes.

48:35

**O'NEIL:** I'm curious about where government should and shouldn't intrude. So, Mr. Trump has promised citizen tests having to do with religion. So, actually a lot of Mormons are very unhappy with Mr. Trump because he's talking about a test about whether a Muslim person can or cannot come here, can or cannot be a citizen.

48:58

**MOLINA:** That's not gonna happen.

48:59

**O'NEIL:** Okay, but he's proposing it. Doesn't that sound intrusive?

49:01

**MOLINA:** He proposed that. That speech kind of—he got kind of shut down quickly.

49:11

**O'NEIL:** So, I guess what I'd ask is, where do you trust him and where don't you? Does that make sense? Or where do you believe he's gonna pursue a policy, and where don't you believe that he will?

49:21

**MOLINA:** We're developing—Trump is developing the policy as we speak, you know. I'm also a candidate. I'm running for a seat in Cumberland County. And I have a plan. But this evolves as we go. You know, it does evolve. You've got to start with a base.

49:43

**O'NEIL:** So he's learning.

49:44

**MOLINA:** Yeah, everybody—. You know, anyone who is running for office should begin with a plan, you know. With a plan that not only he came up with it, you know, the group of people that support him, and the group of people who support him and work it out, you know, and start brainstorming, coming up with ideas: "yeah, okay." But as we start putting these ideas out and we start hearing and receiving feedback from the people, "okay, this thing may not be the—even though that's what I thought was right, maybe we can tweak this out a little bit." Now—.

50:27

**O'NEIL:** So, you don't think it suggests that maybe his impulses go toward intrusion?

50:32

**MOLINA:** No, no, no, no. The thing about religious tests is—because it's with one particular subject, which is the Muslims. Jehovah's Witnesses are not killing people. Mormons are not killing people in the name of their god, you know? Catholics are not killing people in the name of Jesus Christ.

51:03

**O'NEIL:** As a Catholic, I'll say we have a long history of killing people in the name of Jesus Christ. But perhaps not now—

51:07

**MOLINA:** Okay, hold up, hold up. Okay, we can talk about that one. That did happen. That did happen at one time. The Crusades was a war, you know? And it was [a development in] their religion, our religion. But we're not doing that anymore. I mean, we killed people, we killed Muslims, we killed everybody. We killed a lot of people.

51:38

**O'NEIL:** We were very good at it, we Catholics. [Laughs.]

51:40

**MOLINA:** Yeah, okay. Got it. But look, I mean, this stopped, like, over a thousand years ago. I mean, I don't know, my mom spanked my butt when I was five, and I cannot hold that against her today, you know? I mean, we can hold a grudge, but Jesus, you know, I mean, how long are we gonna hold a grudge?

52:19

**O'NEIL:** Can I ask a totally different question?

52:22

**MOLINA:** Yeah.

52:22

**O'NEIL:** What does America mean to you? When you think of America, what is that? What is America to you?

52:32

**MOLINA:** America, to me. America, to me: if there is a heaven—if there was a heaven, the way they taught it to us, Catholics, and Mormons—if there was a heaven, this country is, like, the one step below.

52:55

**O'NEIL:** Why? What is it about this country?

52:58

**MOLINA:** We have, you know—. It's the land of the free, the home of the brave. This is the country where you have freedom to be whatever you want to be. We defend our country. We have the greatest men and women in the world. It's supposed to be that. I have faith, and I believe—I really believe that we are going—. Where we are right now, it's the wrong way. Because our country was founded in the principles of freedom, opportunity. If you work hard, you can be whatever you want, you know: if you work hard, you make your mo—. It's not about money, really. It's not really about being rich or poor, but it's about having the opportunity to do anything you want, you know: that you can work hard and you save money—you can have your children, you know, they can go to college and be educated. You can go to a park and have fun, with no worries. You can stand here under this tree, talking to a stranger, and we can say whatever we want. And there's nobody here, sitting there, hearing what we're saying, to punish us or to follow me home and then kill me when I get home because I

criticized the government and the system, you know? Freedom of speech, freedom of religion. You know, I can worship whatever I want to worship. I can worship a tree if I want to.

54:52

**O'NEIL:** Can you worship the god of Islam?

54:54

**MOLINA:** Yeah, you can worship the god of Islam. You can. But you cannot yell Allah Akbar [sic] and kill everybody because they don't. You know? No. You can't do that. Work—when you're working, you're working. Yeah, you want to pray five times a day? Come on, man. This is America. You want to pray five times a day, you know, you gotta work that out. You know, then you either punch out, go pray, and then punch back in—. But we're a secular country, you know? We're supposed to be secular. Even though this country was founded on Judeo-Christians principles, we are a secular country. Our founding fathers, you know, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, you know, those dudes, they were Christians, but they were also secular, you know. You cannot force a religion as the way of government, you know.

56:10

**O'NEIL:** So, I hate to say this. I've taken you for fifty-five minutes.

56:13

**MOLINA:** That's alright.

56:14

**O'NEIL:** I have to get moving for my colleague. But before that, could I ask you one last question? I was here at the March rally interviewing people, and I didn't ask this question because it didn't occur to me, and then there was interesting unrest in that rally. So I'm curious, I've been asking everyone today, how do you feel about the behavior that you've seen or heard about in these rallies? Does that make sense? Like, when the violence and the violent language, I'm happy to say on both sides—what does that make you feel? How does that work?

56:50

**MOLINA:** It's alright. It's all good. Yeah. Let it go. Let it happen. We all—America—you know. It's politics, man. It's politics. And I do have a—I gotta go, but it's all part of the game, you know. We all have to respect each other, we all have to respect our differences. I cannot force my principles and my beliefs on liberals, and liberals cannot force them on me. I do not believe in abortion, you know? I don't think that's right. But I don't judge, you know? 'Cause who am I to judge about that? That's my biggest thing, you know. Gay marriage, I'm not the one getting married on that, you know? But my biggest thing—one of my biggest things—is abortion. You know, I don't believe in it. I only think it should happen when it's an emergency, or, you know. But after the second trimester? I mean, that's murder. That is murder. Life begins at conception, really. I have three boys, man, and I've seen those kids from the moment—I mean, they start kicking their legs at four months. There's legs and hands and heartbeat, you know. There's life in there. That's not a—no, man. That's not right. But arguments, you know, arguments and rhetoric, it'll all pass this. And it used to be nastier. It used to be nastier in the 1800s

58:46

**O'NEIL:** I'm a historian, I can vouch for that.

58:57

**MOLINA:** It used to be nastier. Yeah. They didn't have Twitter or Facebook then, but it used to be nastier.

58:55

**O'NEIL:** Fair enough.

58:55

**MOLINA:** Oh, yeah.

58:56

**O'NEIL:** Alright. Well, I will stop taking your time, and thank you for it. I need you to sign a paper or two for me.

58:59

**MOLINA:** Let's do it.