

## **Dr. Mario J. Molina**

### **Science and Ethics**

“It was there at Berkeley. It was the time of the student movement and so on that I perhaps became more sensitized to what was happening around me with society, with the problems that society had. And so it’s after I finished graduate school that I decided to attempt to combine my scientific interest with some more direct application of scientific research to societal problems, and that’s how I became interested in environmental issues . . . I became interested in environmental issues and then found out that human activities were potentially leading to a very worrisome situation [in] the environment.

At that time I also made the decision that it was not enough to just do the science, but it was important to try to do something about it, which meant to worry about the policies issue, to try to influence the way society functions, and to actually have society respond to this problem. I felt that there was a certain responsibility of scientists to do just that, which was not yet a generally accepted view. Some other colleagues thought we should simply report what we find, wash our hands, and let the politicians do the job. I thought it was certainly not the thing to do with these global issues that we were uncovering because there was no environmental organization or set of politicians that would have done that. That’s something that has prevailed and first of all, in terms of the ozone layer, it’s something that worked. It took a lot of work, and, of course, it took a lot of collaboration with other scientists and with policy makers. But eventually we succeeded in that an international agreement was signed and ratified, and the Montreal Protocol is working now.”

### **Latino Involvement**

. . . The first one [realization] is the realization that we have indeed this global scale problem and that it’s not sufficient for each community or each country to deal with the problem in isolation. We really have to do that together. In particular, I feel that it’s important for our communities--for Latino communities as representatives of these developing worlds--to participate very actively in the solution of this problem because that’s the only hope that we have.

And a second view is that I feel I have a special responsibility to the Latino community, being Latino myself, having grown up in Mexico City, [and] then, being integrated to the Latino community here in the U.S., and . . . work[ing] with other Hispanics here. And to me what’s also very important [is] to increase the representation of people in our communities in national and international matters. As you mentioned, there are relatively few scientists to begin with in our community. Perhaps because of tradition, perhaps because of history, we are not accustomed to praise science as much as other cultural activities. In today’s world, it is very important to change that.”

### **Creative Good**

“Achievement-- . . . I can look at it from a point of view of something being very rewarding, namely, to have done something for, in this case, for the environment, for society, and to improve the standard of living of people around us . . . It’s an achievement that has been recognized, so that makes it rewarding . . . observing that what I have done has had some consequences, that there’s [a] certain impact, some changes in the way society functions that hopefully have led to an improvement, or has prevented some damage that would [have] otherwise occur[ed].

The message to the young people is that they can be good at science and that they should try to do [science] because it’s a fascinating profession. You do good to your community, to society. But it’s also very enjoyable because it represents a very, very creative process. You have to work hard to do that, but you have to work hard if you want to achieve in any realm.”