

# On Camera and off

## When the News Is Good and When It's Not

Lisa Thomas-Laury

### Introduction

A Familiar foreboding overcame me shortly after my plane landed. West Virginia's mountains would be beautiful this time of year. The autumn leaves would be bursting with color. Still, there was an atmosphere of nervous apprehension surrounding me. I had lived most of my life with a constant dread of returning home.

Now I was thinking about the wheelchair and airport attendant that would be waiting for me outside the aircraft, and again I promised myself I wouldn't always need them. I hadn't notified any of my childhood friends about my visit, not having come to grips with them seeing me ill and practically immobile.

Minutes later, my mom met me in baggage claim; the attendant helped load me and my wheelchair in her car, and we headed west from Charleston on Interstate 64, toward West Virginia State University and my hometown of Institute.

When we turned onto Barron Drive just off campus and approached Louise Street, the memories flooded back. Was this the beginning of my devastating health crisis? Was it possible, as some doctors had surmised, that the chemicals from the Union Carbide plant just a few hundred yards from my home—the toxins I had been exposed to growing up—had altered my genes and led to the devastating disease that had struck me so suddenly and brutally two years earlier?

I recalled the mornings my brothers and I walked from our house to our school bus, past the yellow, powder-like substance covering our neighborhood lawns and cars. We knew it wasn't pollen.

