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- **WUSA 9 TV, Washington, DC reporter Andrea McCarren's interview with Carmel - April 12, 2013**

WASHINGTON (WUSA9) -- In the world of country music, only a few performers of color have made it to the top of the industry—including Charley Pride and Darius Rucker. But a California woman, here in D.C. to sing after Friday night's Washington Wizards game, hopes to break the color barrier for women in country music. WUSA 9's Andrea McCarren caught up with Carmel Helene during her whirlwind visit to the nation's capital.

Growing up, Carmel Helene never fit the mold of a country music star. She told us "I obviously noticed I didn't look like the other girls...My name is not Jennifer. I always wanted to change my name to Jennifer." But country music has been her passion since she was a little girl. "It's got rock, it's got soul, gospel, it's got everything in it," she explained.

Raised in California by a banjo-playing single mother, Carmel always knew she was different. She told us, "Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson were two of my favorites." Even today, people are caught off guard to learn she's a country musician.

Carmel described one conversation, "I was like 'yeah, I'm a country singer.' She was like, 'what?!' I was like, 'what is it about me that I would have to change to look country? I'm just curious. What is the look of country exactly?' She's like 'you'd have to change everything...your face.' And I was like 'HA!'"

Before launching her solo career, Carmel toured with Miley Cyrus, Billy Ray Cyrus and Latin music sensation Luis Miguel. Last year, she hit the road performing with French superstar Johnny Hallyday.

"My son will be two in a couple weeks, so I brought him and my husband on the road with me for six months. Nursing and going on stage, yup," she laughed, remembering the experience.

Women of color have never made it to the top of the country charts. Carmel wants to be the first.

"My aspiration is to be the first African American female to hit number one on the country charts," shared Carmel.

Until now, she's been primarily in the background, as a back-up singer. She says there's "A big difference from the end of this stage to here. Because the pressure is huge when it's you."

Her life story and inevitable rise to fame will provide some good lyrics. "I'm ready now," Carmel assured us.

Carmel expects her first solo country music album to be released later this year. Carmel's new album celebrates her solo career as she "Comes Home To Country". Take a look at this video of a private performance she delivered while at WUSA9 on Wednesday. [Video removed].



**Carmel Helene** pictured here with veteran TV reporter Andrea McCarren of WUSA 9 TV at their studios in Washington D.C.

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