

Charity Austin was interviewed by Pat Matthews. At the time of the interview, she lived at 507 South Bloodworth Street in Raleigh, North Carolina.

"I was borned in the year 1852, July 27. I was born in Granville County, sold to a slave speculator at ten years old and carried to Southwest, Georgia. I belonged to Samuel Howard. His daughter took me to Kinston, North Carolina and I stayed there until I was sold. She married a man named Bill Brown, and her name was Julia Howard Brown. My father was named Paul Howard and my mother was named Chollie Howard. My old missus was named Polly Howard.

"John Richard Keine from Danville, Virginia bought me and sent me to a plantation in Georgia. We only had a white overseer there. He and his wife and children lived on the plantation. We had slave quarters there. Slaves were bought up and sent there in chains. Some were chained to each other by the legs, some by the arms. They called the leg chains shackles. I have lived a hard life. I have seen mothers sold away from their babies and other children, and they cryin' when she left. I have seen husbands sold from their wives, and wives sold from their husbands.

Source: Interview with Charity Austin, Works Progress Administration Slave Narratives, North Carolina, vol. XI, part 1, (Washington D.C.: The Federal Writers Project, 1941), 58-63. <https://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/111/111.pdf>

A Note on Language of the WPA Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938

These oral histories reflect both the experiences of formerly enslaved people and the historical moment in which the interviews were recorded. Interviewers often tried to record the interviewee's spoken language as they heard it. But this process was not as straightforward as it seems. Historians recognize that "what most interviewers assumed to be 'the usual' patterns of speech of their informants' speech was unavoidably influenced by preconceptions and stereotypes."

For more information: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/articles-and-essays/note-on-the-language-of-the-narratives/>