

in those years
my mother
was bedridden
 and later too weak to take care of me.
 malaria
 the word was a dark mystery
 and was what i was told but today i am not so sure
 the dark mystery now is my family.
a giant black woman named irma with huge arms
entered my life
 always gentle
 always tender
 a giant who took care of me.
sometimes we would go to a park in san antonio.
 i was not allowed to sit with her at the back of the bus.
 it was explained by that is how it is.
 sometimes she sat with her hands over her purse.
 sometimes she had to get up and stand if there were
 not enough seats for the whites on board.

once i asked her why five stone columned water fountains
 in the park had a sign saying whites only
 and only one had a sign saying for coloreds.
taking my hand without taking a breath
she said not enough water comes from the edwards aquifer
 this meant rationing by restriction
 and that was sad
 for the state of texas...
 her home was once
 on the nile
 the river of creation
 and it had enough for everyone.

irma.
wf.h.
2022