

Cokie Roberts

The Capitol “Playground”

Childhood memories of roaming the Capitol.

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In the Capitol in the '40s and '50s you had complete and total access, particularly before the Puerto Rican shootings. That was the first kind of terror attack and—of course, the first terror attack was the British in 1814—but the first modern-day terror attack. And up until that point, there was no security at all, and you had complete free run of the place, which was great. I mean, you could run around, and there were stairs that went nowhere and you know, places that you would find that were just complete surprises and delights. The space above the old chamber, Statuary Hall now, that is one of the most interesting places on earth. And, you know, a little kid could get up those ladders a lot more easily. The subway to the Senate—and of course there was only one—well, in fact, there was only one Senate Office Building [Russell] when I was a little kid. And the subway was this darling little wicker number; I think they still have one on display. And, you know, I would ride it for hours. I mean, the guys would babysit me {laughter}. I felt the Capitol was completely this building that was my, you know, playground.