THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM  
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Description: In this segment, ER discusses the coming of spring in Washington Square in New York City.

Participants: ER

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. Yesterday, my subject was spring at Hyde Park. Today, I shall talk about something very similar in some aspects and widely different in others: spring in Washington Square. I’m spending a good deal of time at the apartment in Washington Square just now for the United Nations Gen- General Assembly begins its sessions on April the fifth. This is an adjourned session, and I don’t know how long we’ll have meetings together as a whole in Flushing. Soon after there’ll be committee meetings and I will again be on committee three. Therefore, I shall have to be in town every day in the week, though I’m hoping now and then to steal away at least for a few hours. Fortunately, nature is generous at this season and the bounties of spring are not confined to the country. As the anonymous New York Times columnist asks, "How is it with Manhattan? Can spring penetrate there? How can spring get into the buildings? The cold cubes covering the rectangular blocks bounded by the strips of asphalt and cement which pass for streets?" The writer is asking a rhetorical question. He knows that spring does find its way into Manhattan and he proves it by telling about some of the things that are going on as it happens practically at my own front door. "If you will travel downtown," he urges, "a way down to Washington Square and look around that echo of little old New York, you will come upon spring in town for a little visit." (2:11)

I think his column was quite delightful so I’m quoting a good deal from it. He tells of some of the treasures of Washington Square, the unexpected magnolia about to burst into bloom against the brick wall near the old Rhinelander stable on Fifth Avenue and the ailanthus trees behind the old houses, the flowers in the red pots on the windowsills, and the people who sell flowers from little carts they wheel around. Soon, the artists will be hanging their spring landscapes on the front of the buildings. And as you walk around the square you can see all kinds of paintings, some better than others, but nevertheless a great variety. And at the same time, the poets will be pasting up their lyrics and sonnets. And they don’t seem worried, at least according to our columnist, they seem undismayed that everybody stops to read but nobody buys. At any season, we have those two old gas lamps in MacDougal Alley, I think they’re the only two left in the whole of New York City. And then, through our open windows, we begin to hear now and then the organ grinder who still comes occasionally and plays “East Side West Side” or the old tunes from Il Trovatore. It all makes a special gaiety for this season in spring, and perhaps the nicest part of it all on Washington Square is the young people that go to New York University. And they keep crossing and re-crossing, and over on the east side at noon you’ll see them even holding meetings along the edge of the Square. I think they give you probably the greatest sense of the springtime of life and the feeling of how much there is to live for and how much we should do to make the future a good future for youth. Now back to my daughter, Anna, in Hollywood.

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Transcription: Melissa Melvin
First Edit: Anna Karditzas
Final Edit: Ruby Johnson