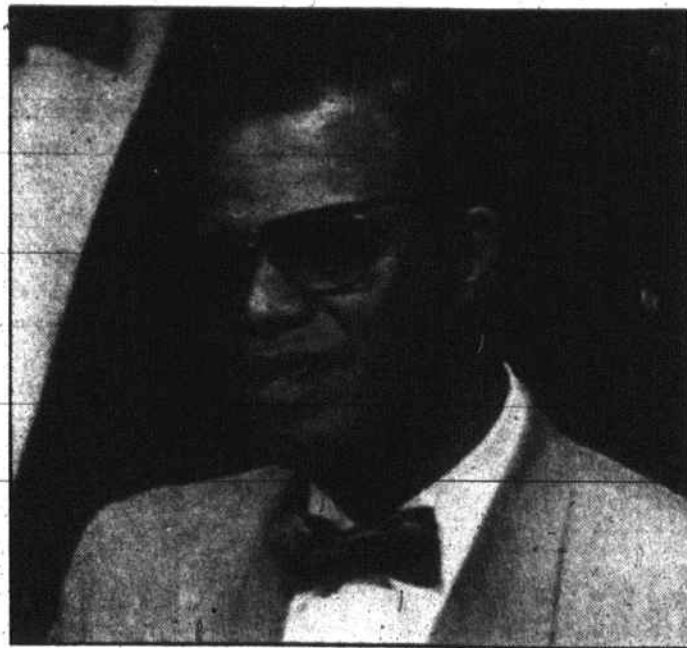


NATIONAL

Black Leaders Convene for NAACP Summit

BALTIMORE (AP) — NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Chavis challenged black leaders Sunday to develop a unified strategy to improve the lives of the nation's 35 million blacks, another step "on our long journey upon freedom road."



Chavis spoke at a 2 1/2-hour televised round-table that opened the group's three-day summit. Actual strategy will be formulated behind closed doors.

"We want to have a fair exchange of views because we believe that the situation facing our people is one of life and death," Chavis said.

"The problem of this century remains the problem of the color line, the problem of racial inequity, economic inequity," he said.

Later at public meeting at a Baltimore church, NAACP Chairman William Gibson said the summit should produce a new civil-rights agenda that addresses crime, drugs, violence and political power — "things that not only keep our youth down, but our communities down."

"We are going to come out of here with an agenda that has economic energy. We are going to deal with corporate America. We are going to deal with business America," he said.

About 65 leaders in business, education, civil rights and religion participated, including Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Farrakhan's presence was criticized by Jewish leaders, but he said the summit's diversity should be a challenge, not an obstacle.

"Those of us who disagree vehemently with one another will help to shape each other's ideas, philosophies and agendas," Farrakhan said.

About a block away from the summit, members of national Jewish groups protested. Farrakhan passed them in a caravan of dark cars.

At one point, Cornel West, a black author and professor of religion at Princeton University, walked up to the protesters and hugged Michael Lerner, the editor of Tikkun, a liberal Jewish magazine. Lerner carried signs that supported the NAACP and criticized Farrakhan. West later attended the round-table discussion.

Police reported no problems, but security was tight at NAACP headquarters, where private security guards and police stood watch along with bow-tied members of the Nation of Islam.

Chavis said there had been threats against the summit, but he would not specify what kind of threats or who was the target. Restrictions on access to the building began 48 hours before the summit after it was thoroughly searched. Security guards and dogs also searched nearby woods.

NAACP leaders dismissed criticism of Farrakhan's participation, saying that no ethnic or religious group has a right to tell another group how to conduct its business.

"We should not let external controversy from letting us meet with one another," Chavis said.

The conference, sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is aimed at finding ways to create jobs and improve conditions for blacks.

"We thank God that you who have come at your own expense have . . . gazed at this next step on our long journey upon freedom road," he told the other leaders.

One issue that could be dis-

Louis Farrakhan cussed is an economic boycott of South Carolina, whose legislature has refused to lower the Confederate battle flag atop the State House.

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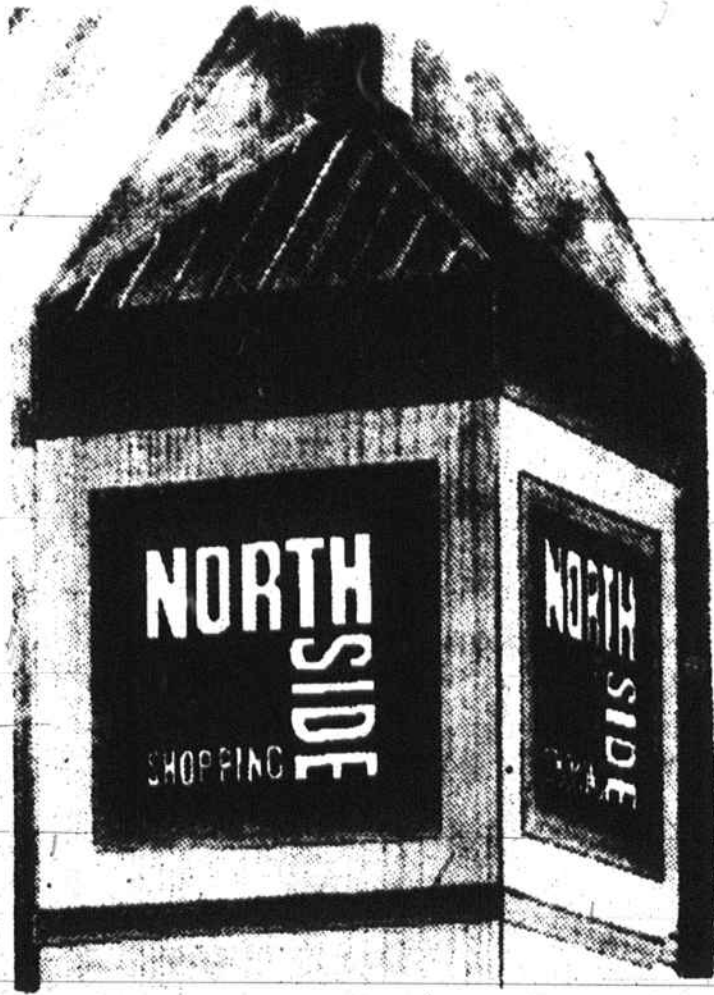
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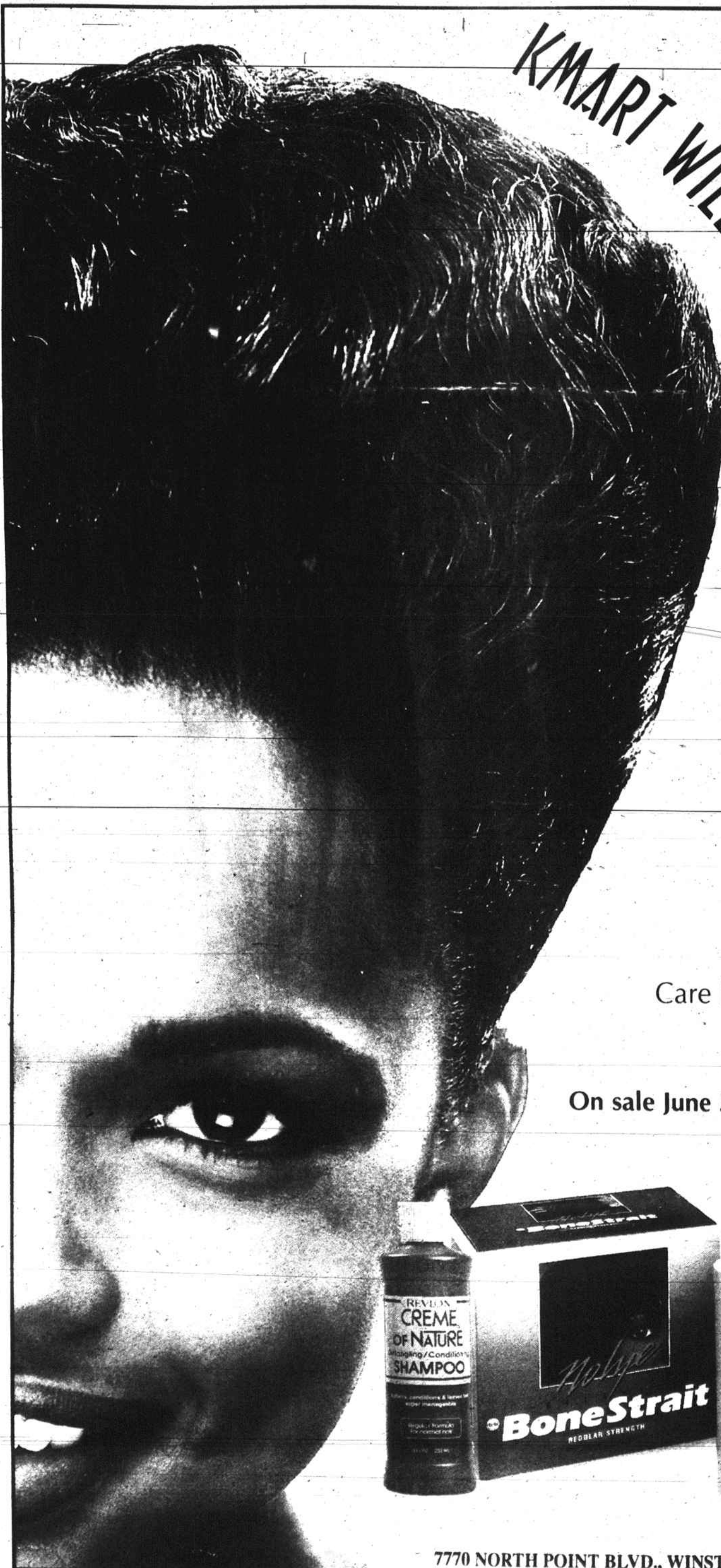
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