

## ALTERNATIVE HOUSE, OAKLAND

"Alternative House" as called, really is an alternative for the troubles, discomforts and anxieties of the typical man, momentarily, out of prison on a seventy-two hour pass and in need of a place to eat and sleep, in need of a temporary home to come.

But "Alternative House" is even more than that. It is the jointly independent effort of a remarkable and extremely talented team of two young men; an ex-con on the one hand and a University professor on the other, two seemingly extreme opposites combined.

Paul Cook is a 29 year old 20 year veteran of our prisons. He has been in nearly every prison that blacks would normally enter in the state of California. Since age 9, beginning in the nation's Capital, Washington, D.C., until a little over a year ago, Paul has struggled in and out of some of the worse juvenile homes, youth camps and maximum custody prisons around. In so doing, he has become a well experienced student of the American system of punishment, crime and criminal justice. Paul is extremely articulate and informative and has appeared on film, radio, T.V. and in a number of symposiums and conferences. Being the highlight speaker, wherever he has appeared, he has more than electrified audiences with an extremely worthy amount of food for thought in talks on the community, the justice system and prison and parole reform.

Maalik Al-Maalik is the product of a broken home of poor delta, Mississippi migrants. He remembers vividly World War II army barrack blankets covering the floors and windows of a smoke filled room and the loud, rowdy players of a dangerously crooked crap game and the white, red, green and other color dice that his father taught him to load at the age of four, just before "mother left and fled up North and had some man to later come get me and dry up my tears and satisfy my hunger," just before his parents separated and then divorced. Growing up as a fatherless child in the village jungles of Watts, Maalik in the mid fifties co-founded one of the most notorious street gangs to ever hit the West Coast. And though the Farmers were a viciously large group of brawling youngsters who formed in Watts and whom Maalik spread to almost all of L.A., today, Professor Maalik stands as one of the few known living survivors of this infamously short lived gang who is not currently inside the penitentiary.

During those days, "Crazy Crump," as Professor Maalik was known, and Paul, as Watts brothers, often bumped heads. Somehow Paul continued on the roof of the prison and "Crazy Crump" obtained a Ph.D. equivalence in Math and in an odd turn of events became a University Professor, teaching such varied courses as "Ancient Black World History," "Health, Medicine and Nutrition from a Bantu Perspective," "Crime and the Black Community," and more recently, "Black Concerns for Blacks in Prison." Maalik, being one of the most resourceful rectors of Afro-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is a spellbouncing orator who has spoken to a widely varied range of audiences. It was during a lecture that he gave in 1969 at an inside meeting of S.A.T.E. in San Quentin, that Paul and Maalik and a number of other inmates and brothers and childhood friends became united once again.

Paul and Maalik have appeared on a number of occasions as team speakers. And, when both talk together, nothing in the realm of knowledge and experience is left unturned. But now this team of two young men, who more than adequately represent the views of a wide range of the black community and who in particular reflect most accurately the sentiments of a large portion of men in prison, are taking their thoughts, ideas, teachings and speeches beyond the aura and impact of words and into the venue of materially tangible fulfillments of the needs of the community and of the inmates of Prison.

"At present, we are able to house and feed without charge, 12 to 15 men with seventy-two hour passes in a magnificently built three-story structure located at 526 - 32nd Street, Oakland."

So that there is provided a strong commitment, "Alternative House" also includes a three-story home aside 526 and is part of the location at which Paul and Maalik and their wives and children live. The inescapable consequences of this is that work is an ongoing 24 hour affair in which the totality of these persons are involved, wherein, home is a job and work includes the place where they live and the people that they live with. And, truly, this is the way our two servants of this project want it; and, moreover, so that this occurs not only as a portion of the warmth and close friendly atmosphere of two nuclei families but so that this venture also shares within the security, and respect and power of an extended family; Paul is sending for his mother and some of his blood brothers. And, likewise, Maalik is sending for the mother-in-law and two children of one of his cousins who is doing life term in San Quentin. The wife of Maalik's cousin passed some years ago, and Maalik sees this as an opportune time to not only draw upon the religious resources of a very strong and God loving woman who has had to struggle alone to raise a prison inmate's children, but he also sees this as a means of carrying out his prisoner rehabilitation practice to the level of aiding a prisoner's family as he aids his own. In this case, the particular prisoner happens to be his cousin. But after all doesn't charity first begin at home? Paul's mother has been a legal secretary and has also headed both a child care and art center. One of Paul's brothers will be studying law as he joins us.

The combined resources of us all will make for one big efficient and effective operation. How much more of an impact can a unified team of close friends and strong family ties make!

Taking into account all that has been said then by virtue of necessity, 526-32nd Street is one of four large adjacent housing or apartment complexes which we intend to buy, join together and modify.

"Ideally, we hope to soon join these homes into an overall complex in such a way as to (1) contribute to the general development of the immediate neighborhood (2) through, in particular, a program for drug abuse and juvenile delinquency (3) which includes a rehabilitation/development program for the convict-ex-convict.

As such, "Alternative House" says Maalik, "is in reality, one of the first concrete steps in a 100 page or more package entitled, Community Development, Crime Prevention and Prisoner Rehabilitation. This is a proposal which in general grew out of my own personal experiences in growing up in Watts, which most directly is the result of my professional involvement with Black Studies, and which most distinctly sprang from my constructing and teaching two courses "Crime and the Black Community" and "Black Concerns for Blacks in Prison."

Within this project/proposal, Alternative House intends to work closely with a number of (1) job development and business groups, agencies or concerns, (2) police, parole and education establishments, and (3) community and church organizations. The House, in particular, will be working closely with Mt. Mariah Missionary Baptist Church which just happens to be next door to one of the places that Alternative House is attempting to purchase. Also, within the immediate area, are a number of other churches with which we hope to work.

"Though much of what we intend to do depends upon the support and funding that we expect to get within the coming months, we have and will manage as long as we can out of our own pockets. And with little of nothing, we are hoping, in the near future to be able to supply for the convict-ex-convict, not only temporary transportation and living facilities, but also a counseling and community job developing service, wherein, we intend to develop and open up many jobs 'right' in the immediate community. In addition to direct convict-ex-convict services, we are also looking forward to assisting in the transportation, housing and counseling of whole families of the inmates."

Alternative House would like to mention that until the House is able to provide for a suitable driver and vehicle, it will be relying upon, mostly, "Connections" for picking up and returning 72-hour passers at San Quentin and, possibly Vacaville. Though doubtful at this point, the House may also be able to assist in some way the pick up and return of a limited number of persons receiving 72-hour passes at other institutions (who may be coming to San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area).

"Alternative House" solicits your help and support, and we ask of whatever donations that may be at your disposal and we ask on behalf of the House and on behalf of the many men in prison whom we are attempting to aid. If it is possible for you to provide monies or honorariums for speaking engagements, we would be more than obliged to arrange a date for you on our schedule.

Please mail checks or money orders to "Alternative House" P.O. Box 4567, Berkeley, California.

If you have any questions call 652-4875 (The House) or  
652-3426 (Office, U.C.B)