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Intercom Article

Solomon Jones is a lucky man.

Recently married in July of 2000 and expecting a baby in October, the 33-year-old Jones has a lot to look forward to. The success of recently having his book published makes his life all the sweeter.

Jones, a 1998 Temple graduate with his bachelor's degree in journalism, is currently a staff writer for the *Philadelphia Weekly* where he writes news features, in-depth stories and investigative stories on a variety of subjects. He has traveled as far away as Ghana to research the history of the Atlantic slave trade, and as near as Philadelphia's Mill Creek neighborhood to be reminded of the grim realities of the drug trade. "In each story, I believe I discover another piece of myself," Jones said.

Jones' book *Pipe Dream* is another piece of the puzzle. It is the fictional story of four drug addicts in North Philadelphia who are pursued by police for a murder they did not commit. "The book takes an honest look at the complicated issues surrounding the drug culture, including police corruption. Along the way, it plumbs the depths of the addicts' physical and emotional poverty. And then, just as honestly, it turns society's mirror on itself," Jones said.

Jones came up with the idea for *Pipe Dream* partially from his own experience. "I think it grew out of my past experience with drug use. This book, which I initially thought would be a short story, took on a life of its own once I began to write. I believe it was a catharsis for me – a chance to take an honest look inside myself and write down what I saw," Jones said.

This self-examination began back in 1995 when Jones wrote the first draft of *Pipe Dream* while working as a desk clerk/concierge at a downtown condominium. "I used to bring a computer to work every night to do my homework because I was a

full-time Temple student. During the summer break, I didn't have any classes, so I started writing. I finished the first draft of *Pipe Dream* in nine months," Jones said.

By 1996, Jones sent his book to a publisher and received his first rejection letter. He picked up writing again in 1997 and took another year to polish the book. In total, he received 50 rejection letters, most of which were form letters from literary agents who never read the book and based their rejection on a query letter. Regardless, Jones saved them all and persisted onward.

"At times, it was very discouraging, but through it all, I learned about the publishing industry, about marketing and promotion, and most importantly, about myself. I learned that a novelist's tenacity is as important as his or her writing ability...because if you are not tenacious, your writing, no matter how good, will never see the light of day," Jones said.

This tenacity will surely serve Jones well when it comes to getting his next book published. Though it is still a work in progress, Jones is hopeful about his current novel Tentatively titled *The Bridge*, it is about a detective's relentless search for the murderer of a little girl in a North Philadelphia housing project.

In setting both *Pipe Dream* and *The Bridge* in North Philadelphia, Jones ultimately hopes to reach out to the community from which he came. "I hope to use *Pipe Dream* to help others change their lives. I have already spoken with the Philadelphia Committee to End Homelessness – which works mostly with homeless, drug addicted men – about donating a portion of my book proceeds to that organization," Jones said.

Jones also hopes to set up a scholarship fund for young men from North Philadelphia to attend Temple University. "Were it not for my experience at Temple University, I'm sure my life would be quite different," said Jones. "People I met, classes I took, skills I learned, were instrumental in allowing me to successfully pursue my goal of becoming a writer," Jones said.