

# 1. Phillip

In "Phillip," the narrative unfolds in late summer 2021 as Phillip Castaneda, a newcomer to the California School for the Deaf in Riverside, navigates homelessness in the backseat of his father's Nissan Sentra. With the world emerging from the coronavirus pandemic, Phillip begins his day by dressing in the car and making his way to Target for bathroom access. The football field, visible from his car, symbolizes his aspirations; despite his small stature, Phillip aims to showcase his speed and toughness on the varsity football team.

Phillip's father, Jude Ward Castaneda, makes sacrifices to provide his son with a place to sleep, parking in an Arlington Avenue lot amid various businesses, including a Yum Yum Donuts and a cannabis dispensary. They often stay away from other vehicles, with Phillip using a gym membership for showers. Each night, after the shops close, Jude and his girlfriend occupy the front seats, allowing Phillip the back for privacy. A gifted athlete in his youth, Jude struggles with his past of addiction and incarceration but is determined to give his son a better chance, hoping Phillip wouldn't follow his footsteps.

Living in California, where around a third of the nation's homeless population resides, Phillip faces the dual challenge of homelessness and a tumultuous upbringing. He has attended six schools and found it particularly arduous to learn English, which contrasts sharply with his native American Sign Language. Born near San Francisco, Phillip was raised under challenging circumstances; his deaf mother, who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and cannot work, relies on disability assistance.

As a teenager in Modesto, Phillip played football among hearing peers, with a friend covering his league fees. Despite his success on the field, communication barriers often left him feeling isolated. He would position himself at the end of practice drills to observe others, illustrating his determination to overcome difficulties. Football becomes his refuge, bringing him joy and hope for a future, even kindling dreams of playing in the National Football League, as noted by his sister, Priscilla Castaneda, who emphasizes football as a source of happiness for him.