

## Introducing Mr. Tex Sample

One of the 3 goals of SEW-CTF is to recognize and preserve the history of the working class in south east Indy, particularly, the greater Fountain Square. Part of this past is reflected in the many “honky tonks” where bands played country and country western music. To help our community members understand, let’s look at the insights of Tex Sample (See: [www.texsample.com/](http://www.texsample.com/) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tex\\_Sample](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tex_Sample))



Tex (born 12.28.34) is a specialist in church and society, a storyteller, author, and professor of Church and Society at the Methodist St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, MO, where he taught from 1967–1999.

Born in Brookhaven, MS, his dad named him after Texanna Gillham, an African American woman who was born in slavery and helped raise his father near Center, TX. He got a BA from Millsaps College, a PhD from Boston University, and a DD from Coe College. He’s a former cab driver, laborer, and oil field roustabout.

Sample’s 5 books, which are essential reading for appreciating Mr. Samples’ affirmation of working-class persons and families, reveal the strengths of the culture and the challenges they face.

*Blue Collar Ministry: Facing Economic and Social Realities of Working People* (1984) tries to answer the question: How is the church ministering to the needs of men and women who work on assembly lines and in machine shops? Not always very effectively, says Sample, drawing his deep understanding of the working-class community from his personal experiences as a laborer. Sample challenges churches that want to develop a relevant ministry to abandon their stereotypical images of working-class people and respond to their real needs.

*Hard Living People & Mainstream Christians* (1993) challenges the church to break the yoke of middle-class captivity and join with Christ who lives among the poor and marginalized. Tex addresses exactly what kind of worship, preaching, and Christian education meet the needs of the working class. He looks at the church and its interactions and motivations for involvement with hard-living people.

*Ministry in an Oral Culture-Living With Will Rogers, Uncle Remus, and Minnie Pearl* (1994) helps pastors educated in the literate culture of academia, bridge the cultural gap between them and those in their congregations who verbalize their faith in proverbs and stories. Implications for preaching, teaching, and counseling are presented as he discusses how questions of morality and social change are handled by people who think in terms of communal relationship rather than abstract theory.

*White Soul: Country Music, the Church, and Working Americans* (1996) challenges the church to reach out to working-class people, who have often been ignored and demeaned by churches held captive to the tastes and lifestyles of the upper middle class. He examines the social, political, and religious foundations of country music as the soul music of white, working-class Americans. Country music gives voice to an economically battered subculture of hard-living and hard-working people who find self-expression in the music of honky-tonks and heartaches. It celebrates the “wild side of life” as a form of populist anarchism and escapist festivity. This unusual medley of sociology, theology, and country music history is also a compelling critique of the elitism of “good taste” in the dominant culture.

*Blue Collar Resistance and the Politics of Jesus: Doing Ministry with Working Class Whites* (2006) notes that to be faithful to the gospel, all ministry must be *indigenous*; it must participate in the distinctive practices and perspectives of the people among whom ministry is taking place. Because our society tends to ignore or deny the reality of class divisions and prejudice, too many congregational leaders know too little about the world of working class whites. Sample’s work on class and American religion, opens up the lives and lifestyles of working class whites in order to engage with them in authentic and transformational ministry.

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