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William R. Ferris Biography

William R. Ferris is a professor of history at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and an adjunct professor in the folklore curriculum. He is associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South, and is widely recognized as a leader in Southern studies, African-American music and folklore. He is the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Prior to his role at NEH, Ferris served as the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi where he was a faculty member for 18 years. Ferris has written and edited 10 books and created 15 documentary films, most of which deal with African-American music and other folklore representing the Mississippi Delta. He co-edited the Pulitzer Prize nominee *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, which contains entries on every aspect of Southern culture and is widely recognized as a major reference work linking popular, folk and academic cultures. His latest book is *Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues*.