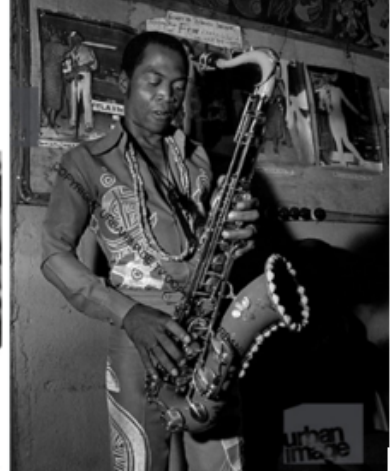


AFROBEAT



The 2023 Wellborn Lecture
Religion Department
Friday, April 14 at 5:00 PM
DHA (Dodd Hall Auditorium - behind Dodd Hall)

**Melani McAlister, Professor of American Studies and International Affairs
George Washington University**

Fela Kuti in America: Thinking Music and Politics through Religious Studies

The Nigerian founder of Afrobeat was an outspoken critic of the Nigerian government, an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, and a superstar performer across Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, before the 1990s, he was all but unknown in the US except for a small but highly dedicated set of fans who saw him as both a musical innovator and as a crucial political voice speaking on behalf of Black pride and against abuses of state and corporate power. This lecture will draw on tools from religious studies, including attention to affect and ritual, to examine Fela's role in inspiring emotionally powerful forms of transnational solidarity among US audiences, including African American jazz fans, anti-imperialist activists, and Black power radicals.