"Axis of Solidarity: Cuba and the Struggle for Freedom in Southern Africa"

This talk brings to life the unparalleled role that over 400,000 Cubans in Angola played in the liberation of southern Africa from the stranglehold of settler colonial rule. I draw on oral histories conducted in Cuba and a unique "archive of solidarity" that includes original posters produced by Cuba's Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) and a vast array of mementos and ephemera that index Cuba-Africa solidarity. The first-hand experiences and perspectives of the Cuban men and women who served in Angola between 1975 and 1991 offer a new analytical lens through which to view the ideological, logistical, and emotional complexity that characterized the unique role that Cuba played in shaping Angola's post-independence political, military, social, and developmental history in particular, and southern Africa’s march towards freedom more broadly.  They also offer a fresh perspective from which to consider how Cubans evaluated their own broad commitments to international solidarity movements, and their specific commitment to Angola and its people within the overlapping contexts of the Cold War and apartheid in neighboring South Africa.

Carina Ray is an associate professor of African and African-American Studies and Director of Faculty Mentoring at Brandeis University. A scholar of race and sexuality; comparative colonialisms and nationalisms; migration and maritime history; and the relationship between race, ethnicity, and political power, Carina’s research is primarily focused on Ghana and its diasporas. She is the author of *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana*, winner of the American Historical Association's 2016 Wesley-Logan Book Prize and the African Studies Association's 2017 Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize. Carina's new book project, a trilogy, engages conceptions of blackness, the body, and human difference, as well as processes of race making and identity transformation across the precolonial, colonial, and post-independence periods in Ghana. She is also working on an oral history project documenting the experiences of Cubans who served in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. She is the editor, with Toyin Falola, of the newly established Cambridge University Press book series, African Identities; editor of *Ghana Studies;*and member of the Board of Editors of *The American Historical Review*and *History in Africa.*