**Fannie Jackson Coppin Pioneer Biography**

**[Name of the Writer]**

**[Name of the Institution]**

**Fannie Jackson Coppin Pioneer Biography**

**Introduction**

**Early Life**

When talking about someone as exceptional as Fanny Jackson Coppin it is safe to say that this woman was destined to achieve wonders. However, her start was not as steady as one would think, but she rose from the ashes like a Phoenix and made history for the people of color. Coppin was born as a slave on the 8th of January, 1837 in Washington DC. Not a lot is known about Coppin’s early life (Wilson, 2019). Historical annals affirm that Coppin's aunt released her from the misery of slavery and afterward throughout her youth Coppin worked for a writer named Hennery Calvert. Coppin was a very determined young girl, she would study at every opportunity that she got. Regardless of the hardships that she faced in her early life, she did not give up her passion for education. Later in 1960, she took admission in the Oberlin College situated in Ohio. Oberlin College was the first ever college of the United States which accepted women of color.

If one goes through Coppin’s autobiography, it is mentioned how there were a plethora of subjects like mathematics, Latin and Greek which the faculty had deemed the gentlemen’s course. Women were not prohibited from taking these courses but were, however, advised not take such subjects. Even though, Coppin knew that she was going to be mocked for her decision but she was ready for a challenge (Wilson, 2019). She also says that everything went smoothly until she entered her junior year. What happened next would change Coppin’s life forever. She was sent an ominous demand by the faculty, to which she had to comply. Oberlin College had this custom that every year when freshmen would be admitted, around forty students from junior and senior classes were tasked to teach the introductory classes. The faculty then told Coppin that if there was any kind of rebellion from the students against her ways, they will not force her to further teach. Though the students were surprised to see a woman of color as a teacher, but there was no such rebellion witnessed. Coppin was excellent in teaching, and therefore her students increased day by day. Consequently, the number of students exceeded a limit, where the administration decided to divide the classes, proportionally. Coppin was given both the divisions but the faculty decided that the work that she was doing is enough and no more increase is required (Grant, Brown & Brown, 2015). During Coppin's time in the college, she taught African Americans in the evening for free. In 1865 Coppin graduated with a Bachelor's degree. It is a great achievement that her hard work and determination paid off and she became the first ever Black teacher of Oberlin College. This also paved the way for more people of color with a similar passion.

**Fanny Jackson Coppin’s Contributions**

Later, Coppin was employed as an educator at the Institute of Colored Youth in 1869. The institute is known as the Cheyney University of Pennsylvania today. Coppin mainly worked in the ladies department and taught subjects like Mathematics, Greek and Latin. After serving the Institute for four good years, Coppin was appointed as the Principle of the school. This was a great achievement as Coppin was the first ever African American who became a school principal (Lockett & Gasman, 2018). After that, for a good 37 years, Coppin worked day and night to improve and enhance the education quality for the African Americans in Philadelphia. She did so by expanding and further growing the institute’s program by further adding an Industrial Department and also Industrial Exchange for women. Further, Coppin was committed and determined to the community outreach. Her social works are noteworthy. Not only did Coppin work on enhancing the education sector, but she also laid the foundation for a Home for girls and young women. Her entire idea was to provide for all these individuals who were not originally from Philadelphia. Coppin also aided the students by connecting them with industries, so they could get a job post graduating. She also worked as a powerful columnist who supported the rights of women and blacks in the local newspaper of Philadelphia. Jackson also added missionary work to her achievements once she married Rev. Levi Jenkins Coppin who was a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal. The couple then moved to South Africa where they founded the Bethel Institute. It was a missionary school which stern upon self-help programs.

**Fannie Coppin’s Powerful Letter to Frederick Douglass**

In accordance to a letter that Coppin wrote for Frederick Douglass in 1876, she portrayed her determination and desire to give an education to the men and women of the African-American community by saying; “I feel sometimes like a person to whom in childhood was entrusted some sacred flame…This is the desire to see my race lifted out of the mire of ignorance, weakness, and degradation; no longer to sit in obscure corners and devour the scraps of knowledge which his superiors flung at him. I want to see him crowned with strength and dignity; adorned with the enduring grace of intellectual attainments." Coppin's words created a mark in history. As a result of her powerful vision for community, she ended up receiving an added appointment as the superintendent. Through this achievement, she broke another record of becoming the first ever African American to be appointed such a position. This letter helped people understand that people of color are equal by every right and they deserve and need to be treated equally just like the whites. This also brought a rise in the African American youth to pursue quality education (Lockett & Gasman, 2018). Coppin’s overall persona and determination showed people a mirror of what they were doing or what they were letting go off in the name of society standards. Coppin paved a path for the African American community by her determinations and achievements, and further strengthened the path by her social work and thoughts.

**America’s Landscape during Coppin’s Time Period**

When Coppin was studying in Oberlin College back in the 1860s she was not just contemplating about mathematics, Greek and Latin. As the rise of the Civil War was witnessed she had this burden on her shoulders that her work in the university will be determining her entire race. She wrote in her autobiography; “I never rose to recite in my classes at Oberlin but I felt that I had the honor of the whole African race upon my shoulders.” Being a freed slave at such a young age instilled in her the importance of education. She wanted to use the power of education to lift up her community (Spicer, 2016). She with her determination not only made great achievements of being the first of her community to get a college degree and lead a school but through those achievements she was more concerned in educating her community's youth and adults. She wanted to pass on her wisdom regardless of the income.

Coppin’s work was amid severe racial strain. The schools which taught the whites were not open to let in newly freed blacks who were seeking to get an education. Coppin was a brave and phenomenon woman, and through her courage, she challenged the long-standing stereotyped beliefs created by the whites regarding the intellectual inferiority of blacks. As her own powerful words state; “For it was one of the strongest arguments in the defense of slavery, that the Negro was an inferior creation; formed by the Almighty for just the work he was doing,” Coppin wrote. “It is said that John C. Calhoun made the remark that if there could be found a Negro that could conjugate a Greek verb, he would give up all his preconceived ideas of the inferiority of the Negro.” The blacks had already been through a lot and Coppin was not standing for it, she raised a voice at the time when blacks were treated badly just for existing (Spicer, 2016). Towards the end of the Civil War, Coppin started to teach night school to the freed slaves in order to educate them and spread awareness.

**Opponents and Supporters of Fannie Coppin’s Work**

One of the biggest supporters of Coppin’s work would be her own community. To this day the milestones that she achieved are acknowledged and talked about as inspiration. Her husband was one of the biggest supporters that she ever had, he helped her preach her wisdom across the world and help Coppin make a mark for her people. The main motto of her life was to somehow raise the status of her community. During all this process of elevating her community, she did make some enemies as well, they were mainly the conservative whites who were not willing to see the Blacks succeed or be treated as humans (Raynaud, 2017). Through every step, she has had the whites mocking her and telling her differently. As she stepped into the world of women rights and feminism, she was further eye-balled by men for the vision she had. There are still people in Southern America who despise her for her bravery and achievements and the black community still remembers her as someone who laid the foundation for their education.

**Reflection of Fannie Coppin’s Work Today**

She was the one who laid the foundation of the black community getting an equal education. She paved the path by being the first from her community to ever get a degree and reach a high rank. In today's policies and educational programs of today, one can see that African American students get enrolled in universities just like the whites and are in an abundant amount as opposed to before (Raynaud, 2017). This was her vision, to begin with, she wanted equal education and employment opportunities for her people and she wanted to see her community succeed and rise. It can be seen today as Obama was America's first Black President and Michelle Obama the first black "First Lady." The Blacks are being given equal opportunities in every step of life, they are progressing and going further just like the whites. This was a dream that Coppin saw and what she wanted to achieve through her work. The policies and programs of nowadays are equal for the black community as well as the whites. Yes, there is still racism at certain footings, but we as a nation have come very far. From slaves to being a highly educated and respected member of the American community, the Blacks really have made a mark just like Coppin once pictured. Whatever the field the black community is flourishing and making a mark. People are finally realizing the work that the Black community is doing which is aiding in the growth and establishment of the world. The black women are also flourishing in the media as well. They are given equal rights as the citizens of the United States now (Laybourn & Parks, 2016). There was an unchaining of the Civil Rights. The policies that once denied the African Americans from ever becoming the citizens of the United States now have them in abundance as respected citizens of the Nation. The programs that once denied the blacks from entering university or school programs now have given them equal rights to get enrolled in the school of their liking. There was once a time that no blacks could apply for a proper job, today people of color are on high posts both in politics and different industries. Back in the 1960s, 60% of working black women worked as servants in domestic households. Currently, the amount has decreased to 2.2 %, and around 60% of these females have white-collar jobs lately.

**Coppin’s Viewpoint**

It should be kept in mind that Coppin’s ideas were not restricted to local and regional level; instead, her efforts were comprised on the idea of national betterment. It was not just the American Community that was in America that she was fighting for in her own way, her steps were taken for all her community across borders (Laybourn & Parks, 2016). She wanted her community to flourish and become self-made with the power of education. She even moved all the way to South Africa to preach her vision.

**Coppin’s Reason behind Initiating Social Change**

It is safe to say that the social change that Coppin wanted to bring was instigated by both her childhood and professional life. She was a freed slave, living a life of oppression is not something that one wants for anyone once they have experienced it. Further, the fact that her Aunt worked day and night to buy her freedom left a mark on her life. She never wanted anyone to ever live the life she started off with. Then, in her professional life as she stepped into college she saw that there is no equality for women and further, her community is not welcomed as the whites. She was there around the time of the Civil War and she saw her people struggling even after they were freed (Taylor, 2019). She could see that there is a difference between the education and job opportunities that the whites and the blacks got. The childhood suffering and experience to observe others in a miserably pathetic condition in the professional lives provoked Coppin to endeavor for a substantial change. Since change starts with the person themselves, so she created an example out of her by getting a degree. This built confidence in the people of her community and she further helped them by inculcating the seeds of education and awareness in them.

**Modern Day Thoughts of Fannie Coppin**

The ideas and compassion of Coppin is alive even after all these years. As mentioned above, we might have come a long way as a nation but it is safe to say that there is still a long way to go. One of the biggest examples of the reflection of her today can be seen in the form of Feminism. Women nowadays regardless of cast, race or color are coming together to ask for equal opportunities in life just like their male counterparts (Taylor, 2019). This notion of women equality was also something that Coppin worked for. Further, she wanted women to get an education to become independent and be given the same opportunities for work as men. Further, there are certain areas where people of color at times have to face racism yet they standup for themselves and fight for their rights. That is again where Coppin's struggle and preachment of equality for her community still live on.

**Conclusion**

Coppin's life from being a freed slave to the first ever of her community to get a college degree and become the principle of a school truly serves as an inspiration to this day. It proves that you yourself decide your own faith. There is no doubt in the fact that when a person decides to make a difference there is no stopping them regardless of the obstacles and circumstances (Commodore, Baker, & Arroyo, 2018). Coppin’s life indeed is the epitome of bravery, determination, feminism and serves as an example for youth to follow their dreams. The change this strong woman created touched the lives of many people and helped in making a mark for the African American community. Coppin was a passionate person about education and she used her academic excellence as a weapon to fight and pave way for her community’s youth as well as the adults.

**References**

Wilson, F. R. (2019). 31. The Roots of Black American Women’s Internationalism: Migrations of the Spirit and the Heart. Women and Migration: Responses in Art and History.

Lockett, A. W., & Gasman, M. (2018). Envisioning Equity: Women at the Helm of HBCU Leadership. In Underserved Populations at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: The Pathway to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (pp. 201-214). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Spicer, T. T. (2016). Culturally Responsive Leadership: A Phenomenological Case Study on African American Female High School Principals (Doctoral dissertation).

Raynaud, C. (2017). African American Women’s Voices at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. In Women in International and Universal Exhibitions, 1876–1937 (pp. 151-174). Routledge.

Laybourn, W. M., & Parks, G. S. (2016). Brotherhood and the quest for African American social equality: A story of Phi Beta Sigma. U. Md. LJ Race, Religion, Gender & Class, 16, 1.

Taylor, N. A. (2019). Institute for Colored Youth. In Unsung Legacies of Educators and Events in African American Education (pp. 123-127). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Grant, C. A., Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2015). Black Intellectual Thought: A Cacophony of Experiences, Movements, and Ideas. In Black Intellectual Thought in Education (pp. 25- 52). Routledge.

Commodore, F., Baker, D. J., & Arroyo, A. T. (2018). Black women college students: A guide to student success in higher education. Routledge.