Coppin, Fanny Jackson,
educator and missionary whose innovations as head principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in
Philadelphia included a practice-teaching system and an elaborate industrial-training department.

Born a slave, Fanny Jackson was bought into freedom by an aunt while still a small girl. She determined
to get an education and, while employed as a domestic servant, studied to enter the Rhode Island State
Normal School. In 1860 she entered Oberlin College. Upon graduating in 1865, Jackson began teaching
Latin, Greek, and mathematics at the Institute for Colored Youth, where she also served as principal of the
girls' high school department. In 1869 she became head principal of the Institute; she was the first
African-American woman in the country to hold such a position, and she quickly began to direct the
course of the school.

In 1871 Jackson introduced a normal-school department, and within a few years, enrollment in teacher
training had far exceeded the enrollment in the classics course. To the ordinary work of teacher training,
Jackson added a practice-teaching system in 1878. In 1881 she married the Reverend Levi J. Coppin, who
in 1900 became a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1889, after a 10-year campaign,
Fanny Coppin realized her hope to introduce an industrial-training department that offered instruction in
10 trades. To her, vocational training was as important a tool as academic education in the struggle to end
racial discrimination.

Fanny Coppin resigned her post with the Institute in 1902. (The school was moved to Cheyney, Pa., in
1904 and eventually became Cheyney State College [1951].) That same year the Coppins sailed for Cape
Town, S.Af., and over the next decade she worked tirelessly among the native black women, organizing
mission societies and promoting temperance, as well as founding the Bethel Institute in Cape Town. She
then returned to Philadelphia, where she spent the remainder of her life. In 1926 the High and Training
School of Baltimore was renamed the Fanny Jackson Coppin Normal School (now Coppin State College).