the novel a rms what we already know about its unnamed protagonist: he lacks character. But it is also the case, as Kenneth Warren has more recently argued in his provocative discussion of Ralph Ellison, that "Johnson's novel

to go up to Columbia University to talk with Matthews about enrolling in his courses, Johnson was flattered to find

that Professor Matthews knew of my work in musical comedy, a phase

for himself in African American literature, putting, in e ect, Matthews's

Before I had gone very far wlI ha271 sce work, I realized-271 (ha2at-271 (hsuc)-271 (ha-271 (h

his essay to distinguishing The Book of American Negro Poetry from other poetry  $\boldsymbol{a}$ 

anthology, Johnson hoped to show that African Americans were vital to making America, as Matthews had persuasively written, di erent.

This nation su ers, according to Johnson, from a hazardous blind spot when it comes to "matters of Negro

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Brander Matthews,