28 U.S.C. § 1257. State courts; certiorari

(a) Final judgments or decrees rendered by the highest court of a State in which a decision could be had, may be reviewed by the Supreme Court by writ of certiorari where the validity of a treaty or statute of the United States is drawn in question or where the validity of a statute of any State is drawn in question on the ground of its being repugnant to the Constitution, treaties, or laws of the United States, or where any title, right, privilege, or immunity is specially set up or claimed under the Constitution or the treaties or statutes of, or any commission held or authority exercised under, the United States.

(b) For the purposes of this section, the term ''highest court of a State'' includes the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

ROOKER v. FIDELITY TRUST CO., 263 U.S. 413 (1923)

D.C. COURT OF APPEALS v. FELDMAN, 460 U.S. 462 (1983)

The *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine, we hold today, is confined to cases of the kind from which the doctrine acquired its name: cases brought by state-court losers complaining of injuries caused by state-court judgments rendered before the district court proceedings commenced and inviting district court review and rejection of those judgments. *Rooker-Feldman* does not otherwise override or supplant preclusion doctrine or augment the circumscribed doctrines that allow federal courts to stay or dismiss proceedings in deference to state-court actions.

In *Rooker* v. *Fidelity Trust Co.,* 263 U.S. 413, the parties defeated in state court turned to a Federal District Court for relief. Alleging that the adverse state-court judgment was rendered in contravention of the Constitution, they asked the federal court to declare it "null and void." *Id.,* at 414—415. This Court noted preliminarily that the state court had acted within its jurisdiction. *Id.,* at 415. If the state-court decision was wrong, the Court explained, "that did not make the judgment void, but merely left it open to reversal or modification in an appropriate and timely appellate proceeding." *Ibid.* Federal district courts, the *Rooker* Court recognized, lacked the requisite appellate authority, for their jurisdiction was "strictly original." *Id.,* at 416. Among federal courts, the *Rooker* Court clarified, Congress had empowered only this Court to exercise appellate authority "to reverse or modify" a state-court judgment. *Ibid.* Accordingly, the Court affirmed a decree dismissing the suit for lack of jurisdiction. *Id.,* at 415, 417.

Sixty years later, the Court decided *District of Columbia Court of Appeals* v. *Feldman,* 460 U.S. 462. The two plaintiffs in that case, Hickey and Feldman, neither of whom had graduated from an accredited law school, petitioned the District of Columbia Court of Appeals to waive a court Rule that required D. C. bar applicants to have graduated from a law school approved by the American Bar Association. After the D. C. court denied their waiver requests, Hickey and Feldman filed suits in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. *Id.,* at 465—473. The District Court and the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit disagreed on the question whether the federal suit could be maintained, and we granted certiorari. *Id.,* at 474—475.

Between 1923, when the Court decided *Rooker*, and 1983, when it decided *Feldman*, the Court cited *Rooker* in one opinion, *Fishgold* v. *Sullivan Drydock & Repair Corp.,* 328 U.S. 275, 283 (1946), in reference to the finality of prior judgments. See *Rooker* v. *Fidelity Trust Co.,* 263 U.S. 413, 415 (1923) ("Unless and until … reversed or modified, [the state-court judgment] would be an effective and conclusive adjudication."). *Rooker*'s only other appearance in the United States Reports before 1983 occurs in Justice White's dissent from denial of certiorari in *Florida State Bd. of Dentistry* v. *Mack*, 401 U.S. 960, 961 (1971).