

**PERSPECTIVE: VERIFY THE SOURCE**  
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Do you have it posted on or near your altar?

It's called "President Ikeda's Daily Determination." It certainly sounds very Buddhist in spirit. It's being distributed among leaders and members almost like a chain letter — and being taken as some special guidance from SGI President Ikeda. But, unfortunately, it's not by President Ikeda, even though it is a superb daily determination. And that's why it's never been published by the SGI in any of its publications.

The "Daily Determination" is, in fact, nearly word-for-word "Promise Yourself," the Optimist Creed, which the Optimists International adopted in 1922. "Promise Yourself" was penned by motivational author Christian D. Larson in his 1912 book *Your Forces and How to Use Them*.

It reads: "Promise Yourself — / To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind. / To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet. / To make all your friends feel that there is something in them. / To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true. / To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best. / To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own. / To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future. / To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile. / To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others. / To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble."

How "Promise Yourself" was transformed into "President Ikeda's Daily Determination" is a mystery that may never be solved. What is known is that it somehow appeared — in the form of photocopied sheets — and became popular in the SGI-USA over the last two years. At least two SGI-USA national-level leaders assured me, while I prepared this article, that the "Daily Determination" was not by President Ikeda.

What value can we glean from knowing the truth about the "Daily Determination"? First, the importance of verifying the source of materials and their accuracy. This theme occurs in our school of Buddhism from the very first days, when Nichiren Daishonin, as a young man seeking to determine the correct Buddhist teachings, spent years studying sutras and commentaries.

The Daishonin rightly sensed that misinterpretations, inaccuracies and the like had resulted in serious, harmful distortions of Buddhist teachings. The results of following misinterpretations and distortions are exhaustively explained by the Daishonin in works such as the "Rissho Ankoku Ron."

The second piece of value to be gained, in my opinion, is a realization that the bodhi-sattva spirit has long been present in American culture, even among those doubtless unfamiliar with Buddhism. President Ikeda has often suggested this; the Optimist Creed shows this. President Ikeda has pointed to great Americans, past and present, of all races, as exemplary optimists. Perhaps a little-known U.S. motivational author of the early 20th century is yet another example.

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Title: Verify The Source  
Subject: World Tribune 02/12/99 n.3229 p.9 WT990212p09  
Author: S. D. Yana Davis  
Keywords: Attitude Behavior Davis Perspective Source Tribune Verify World Yana