Thousands speak out on divide
Series prompts call for more discussion
By Ron French / The Detroit News

Readers flooded The Detroit News with responses to the series, "The Cost of Segregation," many offering lifelong perspectives and heartfelt recommendations for narrowing the region's racial divide.

Questions on The News' Web site have garnered more than 3,000 responses. Almost 300 readers have asked to participate in a public forum. And nearly 200 people have written letters or called.

"For years, I've argued with family and friends that Metro Detroit will never reach its full potential as long as the city and suburbs are content to drown themselves in the ignorance of racism," wrote Clifton Simmons, a 34-year-old black resident of Troy. "It amazes me how we, as African Americans, quickly dismiss how others fought for our right to live where we please."

"I used to treat it as a taboo subject to be avoided," said Jennifer Krzys, 25, a white resident of Livonia. "Now I know that racism and segregation is still there.
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Racism and segregation is still there, whether we talk about it or not.

The series has led to the creation of a race relations student organization at Central Michigan University, and was part of the discussion in numerous Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations. The series has sparked a long-overdue debate, said Detroit City Councilwoman Sharon McPhail.

"Nobody's blameless in the situation," McPhail said. "We all need to examine our own attitudes and look at how we can get past our differences."

Some readers strongly disagreed with the series, saying it opened old wounds. Others asked how they could become involved in a community-wide discussion.

"I really see segregation as a serious problem in our area, and I fear that the problem is only going to get worse as my children grow up," said Jennifer Clark, 28, of Wayne.

"I am perplexed by those who ignore the (cost) of segregation," wrote Sandra Clemons, 56, of Detroit. "It begins with inflation of suburban property, continues with the depressed value and condition of Detroit property and spreads through every fiber of life in the Metropolitan Detroit area."

Public discussion on segregation
If you'd like to participate in a town-hall forum on the issue of segregation call (313) 222-2716, (313) 222-2717 or click here.