



CAPTAIN MARVEL & MS. MARVEL: THE GROWTH OF A FEMINIST ICON

HOW THE SUPER HEROINE WENT FROM FEMINIST FOR HER ERA TO FEMINIST FOR ANY ERA.

In *Ms. Marvel* #1 (1977) Carol Danvers discovered her super-powers and took the codename Ms. Marvel. As a mortal, Danvers was the editor of a women's magazine and an ardent advocate of equal pay for women, but her super hero identity was tied to the era's ultra-feminized depictions of female characters. Her newfound identity came with a costume reminiscent of Captain Marvel's—a red blouse that flowed into a cape, and a blue mask and gloves. It wasn't until *Ms. Marvel* #20 (1978) that Danvers ditched the open-midriff design for a black leather suit with a red sash and the signature lightning bolt zigzagging down her torso.

Danvers underwent a massive transformation when she became Binary in *Uncanny X-Men* #164 (1982). As Binary, Danvers was significantly more powerful than Ms. Marvel; she tore across panels fighting villains with the power of any male Marvel super hero. Artists Dave Cockrum and Bob Wiacek designed Binary to appear science fictional, with fire-engine red skin that contrasted against her stark white costume.

On the cover of her debut appearance, Binary appeared geometric and sharply drawn, surrounded by a halo of fire.

In *Captain Marvel* #1 (2012), Ms. Marvel became Captain Marvel, and her creators more fully realized the character's feminist potential. As Captain Marvel, Danvers wears a full-body jumpsuit and retains the red sash. On the cover, a stately and powerful Danvers anchors the page, while clean-lined lettering and a bold, geometric illustration provides a modern backdrop.

Ms. Marvel received another contemporary update in *Ms. Marvel* #1 (2014) as Kamala Khan, a teenage Pakistani American (and Marvel's first Muslim headline character). Khan, who idolizes Captain Marvel, chooses to use the codename Ms. Marvel in homage to her. Visually, the new Ms. Marvel is both a lineage hero and a 21st-century character: Her costume, designed by Jamie McKelvie and drawn by Adrian Alphona, combines the colors and icons of Captain Marvel's old costumes in a shalwar kameez-influenced outfit that is unlike anything a super hero has ever worn.



Ms. Marvel showed off her signature lightning bolt for the first time in *Ms. Marvel* #20 (October 1978) as seen in figure 2. The symbol has become synonymous with the character and is still used on Ms. Marvel's current costume, designed by Jamie McKelvie for the character Kamala Khan.